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ABSTRACT

The Politics and Mass Media section of the proceedings contains the following eight papers: "Politics and the War on Drugs: Patterns of News Coverage" (Lisa Brockmeier); "The Challenge of Bearing Witness in Political Reporting: Making the Public Conversational Partners" (Karon Reinboth Speckman); "The Concrete-Avoidance Model: Media, Public Opinion, and the Gulf War" (Karon Reinboth Speckman); "Voters' Reasoning Processes and Media Influences during the Persian Gulf War" (Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki); "Voices of Dissent during the Gulf War: Did the Media Regard the Anti-War Movement as a Legitimate Challenger?" (Suzanne R. Yows); "Constructing News Narratives: ABC and CNN Cover the Gulf War" (Bethami A. Dobkin); "Effects of a One-Week Change in Media Habits on Knowledge and Judgments about Presidential Primary Candidates: A Field Experiment" (M. A. Ferguson and others); and "Election-Year Usefulness of Newspapers and Other Information Sources for Alabama Legislators" (Daniel Riffe). (RS)

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# PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

(75th, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, August 5-8, 1992).

## Part VI: Politics and Mass Media.

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# Politics and the War on Drugs: Patterns of News Coverage

Paper submitted to the annual conference of
The Association for Education
in Journalism and Mass Communications
Qualitative Studies Division

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# Politics and the War on Drugs: Patterns of News Coverage

The "war on drugs" is not new; former President Richard Nixon called for a "total war against dangerous drugs" in 1972 (see "Drug Wars Past and Present," *Washington Post*, Sept. 5, 1989, p. A17). The war metaphor became much more prevalent in news and policy discourse in the early 1980s when Ronald Reagan made fighting drugs a priority of his administration. Since then, and especially during the administration of George Bush, who has frequently capitalized on the issue of drugs, the terms "drug war" and "war on drugs" have become accepted definitions of the issue in the media.

This paper will not attempt to gauge news audience acceptance of the war metaphor, but will instead focus on the news product itself. McLeod, et al., (1990) discuss audience understanding of the "war" metaphor in more depth. Their study examines whether "audience frames," or their cognitive maps of the drug war, correspond to "media frames," or the presentation of the issue in the news media. Particularly at issue was whether and how the war metaphor "primed" the audience, or activated their existing cognitive structures. Study results indicated that people's cognitive maps of the drug issue varied greatly while still following certain patterns, leaving intact the notion that media could have a role in drawing cognitive maps for the audience. In other words, news media may influence not only what we think about but how we think about it. The researchers suggested that in order to establish this link more firmly, more questions need to be asked about drug news content in the media. This paper is an attempt to do that. Of the questions suggested by McLeod, et al., the most pertinent here is "How did the news media react to the efforts of the Bush administration to frame the drug issue as a 'war'?"

To extend the metaphor, the drug war is "fought" on many fronts. There is the U.S. domestic "war," which includes the issues of drug use, drug trafficking and drug-related violence within the borders of the United States. There is also an international drug "war" which includes efforts by U.S. law enforcement officials to stop the flow of drugs "at the source." It also includes efforts by "source" countries to deal with the violence and economic effects of the drug trade, many of which are in part a result of the illegal status of the drugs and U.S. law enforcement efforts. This paper will concentrate on news coverage of the "international" front, specifically on the "war" involving cocaine production and trafficking in the Andean region.

The central presupposition behind my proposed analysis is that the war on drugs is not about drugs, but about politics. It is an integral part of a post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy aimed at maintaining U.S. dominance, especially in the so-called "Western" hemisphere. The drug war helps maintain the "threat" necessary to justify sustained U.S. interference in the affairs of its southern neighbors, from political and economic pressure to "low-intensity" conflict to full-fledged military invasion. This argument is nothing new; it occurs frequently in academic and "alternative" press analyses of the war on drugs. (Chomsky, 199_; Drucker, 1990; McConahay and Kirk, 1989; Bullington and Block, 1990)

Focusing on the media is important here because in some senses, the war on drugs is fought in the media. The officials involved carry on their debates over tactics, resource allocations and politics through news conferences, press releases and interviews as much as in offices and committee meetings. Tuchman (1978) voiced the suspicion that "news is an interchange among politicians and policy makers, newsworkers, and their organizational superiors, and that the rest of us are eavesdroppers on that ongoing conversation." (p. x) Whether this is an accurate characterization or not, getting their views disseminated through the media is one part of the effort by those involved in shaping policy to garner political and popular support for their views, and to have these views accepted as reality.

I will argue that U.S. news media, represented here by *The Washington Post*, has not deviated from the war metaphor as a definition of the issue and in fact has relied on official definitions to guide coverage in accordance with official goals of intervention in Latin America (Specifically the Andean region, in terms of this analysis). The coverage has been marked by images of violence, simplified and formulaic portrayal of the issues, and a lack of regard for the power structures and political processes within which the events take place.

More importantly, perhaps, the war metaphor has served as an effective camouflage for other, perhaps less publicly popular, agendas of the U.S. government, and the press has cooperated by keeping coverage in line with the official definition of "drug war." By confining debate this way, the media help legitimize and reproduce the existing institutions, processes and power structures (of which they are a part). Moreover, "news," opinions or arguments that do not fit within the legal/moral parameters defining the drug war debate are excluded or discredited. The resulting news product is thus sanitized of content that would enable those who depend on it for information to question the policies, purposes and foundations of the war on drugs.

The drug war "news" also flattens out and simplifies the images of the regions and peoples involved. Drug traffickers and coca producers are often lumped together in the same basket as the "enemy" against whom the war on drugs is directed, which masks the complex and somewhat imperialist relationship between the two. Coca is portrayed solely as the origin of cocaine and not as a crucial social, spiritual and dietary part of the indigenous Andean culture, which legitimizes all eradication efforts (including burning entire fields or spraying with dangerous herbicides). The fact that widespread use of its derivatives is viewed as a problem in the United States subsumes its importance to Peruvian and Bolivian Indians and stigmatizes its cultivation as immoral. In addition, the portrayal of Bolivia, Peru and Colombia as drug war problem areas often overshadows information about other serious political problems facing those countries. All three are experiencing economic, social and political crises of which the drug trade is only part. However, because it is high on the political agenda in the United States, the drug war takes top billing in U.S. media.

## Theories of News Production and Media/State Relations

I will base this analysis on a number of theories that discuss the media and the reproduction of status quo, trying to bridge varying levels of analysis, from the structural to the organizational to the textual. I would like to root the analysis in an awareness of ideology and its functions, specifically the notion of ideology as elaborated by Marx and Engels. (1982) Essentially, this view holds that ideology is a means of the masking the true nature of capitalist relations of production in order to reproduce those relations. Or more succinctly:

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas. i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time it ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. (1982, p. 64)

One problem with this conception of ideology is its rootedness in notions of class. It presents difficulties in analyses of forms of domination where class is not the operative issue, which is the case in my analysis of the drug war. Thompson (1990) makes this distinction and calls for a conception of ideology that preserves its negative, critical connotation but transcends some of the problems he sees with Marx's conception, one of which is the understanding of ideology in terms of class relations. Thompson refocuses the issue away from class relations to a broader notion of "relations of domination."

> It is important to emphasize that class relations are only one form of domination and subordination, they constitute only one axis of inequality and exploitation; class relations are by no means the only form of domination and subordination.
>
> While Marx was right to stress the significance of class relations as a basis of inequality and exploitation, he tended to neglect or downplay the significance of relations between the sexes, between ethnic groups, between individuals and the state, between nation states and blocs of nation-states; he tended to assume that class relations form the structural core of modern societies and that their transformation was the key to a future free from domination. (p. 57)

Thompson not only provides a good starting place for a discussion of ideological reproduction, but he provides a compelling argument for focusing on mass communication in any study of ideology. Traditional understandings of ideology have seen it as a "kind of 'social cement,' and mass communication was viewed as a particularly efficacious mechanism for spreading the glue." (p. 3) He argues instead for an understanding of mass communication as more than just a mechanism of ideological reproduction, but as one means through which social interaction itself is shaped. It is not "a mere supplement" to pre-existing social relations, but has a "has a fundamental impact on the ways in which people act and interact with each other." He is careful to point out that he is not arguing determinism; that the deployment of media is always within a broader and limiting social and institutional context. However, "New technical media *make possible* new forms of social interaction, modify or undermine old forms of social interaction, create new foci and new venues for action and interaction, and thereby serve to restructure existing social relations and institutions and organizations of which they are part." (p. 225)

It is from this understanding of ideology and mass communication that I wish to begin a discussion of the mechanisms through which news functions ideologically. For this I will look at specific theories and models of media structures and processes, because the theories of ideology stop short of providing a satisfactory explanation of how ideology gets incorporated into the information we receive and use in our everyday lives. I will focus exclusively on the "production" side of communication, despite arguments by some theorists that the location of power in communication lies with the audience (Ang, 1985; Fiske 1989). The argument against viewing the audiences' interpretive capacities as power is that, as many scholars point out, the range of information we receive is limited by such structural and institutional constraints as to render it useless for informed choice and decision-making. (Bennett, 1988; Schiller, 1989) As Schiller puts it:

> It is not a matter of people being dupes, informational or cultural. It is that human beings are not equipped to deal with pervasive disinformational system—administered from the commandposts of the social order—that assaults the senses through all cultural forms and channels. (1989 p. 156)

Thus I will focus on the text as the unit of analysis. However, it is not enough to start with a text and unravel the ideological constructs it may contain. To do this would be to risk giving the text some sort of autonomy, a "life of its own," so to speak. Instead, we must ground textual analysis in an understanding of the structure and contexts within which it was created. To do this, I will draw upon theorists who focus on the media structures and practices at various levels. One key model, which incorporates several levels of analysis, is the propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky. (1988) They examine the political economic factors that make the media system a useful tool of the government and moneyed elite, arguing that despite private ownership and the lack of formal censorship, the U.S. media serve as a propaganda system for the government and dominant private interests. This is accomplished through the following five news "filters," which allow only news that serves as propaganda to pass:

> (1) The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) "flak" [negative responses to media coverage] as a means of disciplining the media' and (5) "anti-communism" as a national religion and control mechanism (1988, p.2).

This model bridges the structural level (media as capitalist enterprises) and the organizational level (pressures from advertising, official sources and "flak" on journalists' work). One potential problem in the wide application of this model is that it is historically and geographically specific; it emphasizes the conditions that exist in the late-twentieth-century U.S. media system and may not be applicable to other cases. However, it is appropriate to my analysis of U.S. news coverage in 1989, so I consider it a valid place to begin. The "anti-communism" filter also seems to present a problem in relation to this analysis: If we are talking about a "war on drugs," does the anti-communism filter apply?" I argue that anti-communism is still a dominant official concern; my analysis discusses several points of intersection between the drug war and counterinsurgency efforts in which the counterinsurgency concerns appear to prevail in the official view, whether overtly or covertly.

It is within this model that we may view studies that focus more closely on the organizational pressures and the texts that result. At this level, the institutional pressures, norms and standards operate as part of the daily routines of journalists at each step of news production, from "gathering" information to writing and layout, and shape the product that reaches consumers of news.

Several scholars such as Breed (1955) and Schulman (1990) deal with the question of how policies, norms and other constraints are enforced within news organizations, and both conclude that, to a large extent, these controls are internalized by the journalists; direct enforcement is rarely necessary. Tuchman (1978) expands this consideration of controls within the institution of journalism to include not just how reporters are kept in line ideologically and professionally, but how the structures and routines within which they operate determine what becomes news. She uses the metaphor of a "news net flung through time and space" to describe how factors such as where and when journalists operate and how they categorize and "typify" news ensures that certain issues and events are recorded and disseminated as news while others are not.

This notion that there is nothing inherent in events or processes that makes them news is important to consider in a critical analysis. News is not a collection or series of events or occurrences, but rather the reporting or accounting of such happenings. Tuchman argues that by transforming mere happenings into public events, news gives occurrences "public character" and is thus a social institution. She classifies news with other stories as a "product of cultural resources and active negotiations," comparing it to a fairy tale:

> Thus, "once upon a time" is the obvious start of a fairy tale. "Egyptian planes bombed and strafed a Libyan air base today, a military spokesman here announced," is the obvious start of a news story. "Once upon a time" announces that what follows is a myth and pretense, a flight of cultural fantasy. The news lead proclaims that what follows is factual and hard-nose, a veridical account of events in the world (1978, p.5).

As with any story, the meaning of news and its implications can change depending on who is telling it and the manner in which it is told. In news discourse we must add another variable: Whose story is being told? Or, put another way, if we think of communication as a process of reality sharing, then we must ask whose meanings or realities are being made available for sharing. This understanding of news is crucial if we are considering news as serving an ideological function, that is, the notion that the meanings that get reproduced are those of the economically and politically powerful -- whose meanings, it can be argued, support the status quo or serve to thwart any downward shift in power or resources. According to Stuart Hall (1982), there is a struggle over meaning and over access to the means through which meaning is produced between two groups: those who enjoy access to those means and whose statements carry the "representativeness and authority which permitted them to establish the primary framework or terms of an argument" (p. 81), and those unable to gain such access, who are forced to operate within the parameters of debate set down by the powerful.

Tuchman's idea of a "web of facticity" enhances the notion of primary frameworks and parameters of debate:

> To flesh out any one supposed fact one amasses a host of supposed facts that, when taken together, present themselves as both individually and collectively self-validating. Together they constitute a web of facticity by establishing themselves as referents to one another: A fact justifies the whole (this story is factual) and the whole (all the facts) validates the fact (this particular referent). (1978 p. 86).

In other words, a "fact" is seen as such within a certain context outside of which its "facticity" is lost. The fact supports the context and the context supports the fact. Therefore, if one factual "loose thread" is pulled, the entire context can unravel, dismantling the web. Tuchman argues that journalists amass mutually self-validating facts because it simultaneously allows them to accomplish their jobs while reconstituting the "everyday world of offices and factories, of politics and bureaucrats, of bus schedules and class rosters as historically given" (ibid., p. 87). Put simply, journalists select facts which are verifiable according to an established "reality."

Hall defines news as a construction of social knowledge, through which we perceive others and construct their lives and ours into a coherent reality. The exchange involved in making news is unequal, he argues, allowing the ruling class greater access to its mechanisms through ownership and authority. As I discussed earlier, their definitions thus get reproduced and become, through the construction of social knowledge, the primary "reality" for the subordinate classes.

Hall argues that news is constructed within a context of "consensus and consent" shaped and structured in the "unequal exchange between the unorganized masses and the organizing centers of power and opinion" (1977 p. 342). News is a product of a complex sorting and selecting process, not just the simple reporting of events which are inherently newsworthy. The process involves the bureaucratic organization of the media, a structure of "news values" and the presentation of the item to its intended audience so that it is intelligible. This process relies on the notion of consensus and the idea that we, as members of society, have access to the same "maps of meaning" (Hall et al. 1978). As Hall et al. put it:

> Because we occupy the same society and belong to roughly the same "culture," it is assumed that there is, basically, only **one** perspective on events: that provided by what is sometimes called **the** culture, or (by some social scientists) **the** "central value system." (p. 55)

This idea of consensus implies the assumption that members of society have roughly the same interests and an equal share of power in the society Hall et al. argue that it thus has important political consequences when taken for granted as a foundation for communication.

Essential to this analysis is an understanding of the concept of "primary definers." According to Hall et al., primary definers are those sources who are allowed to set the parameters of debate on an issue. The notions of "impartiality," "balance" and "objectivity" prompt a reliance on news sources that can lend a sense of authority and legitimacy to media statements. These sources tend to be the power-holders because their positions in society give them the required credibility. By relying on these sources, newspeople give preference to their opinions, thus the sources become "primary definers." They are able to establish the primary interpretations of issues and set up the terms of reference for all future discussions of the topic. Because they reproduce the definitions of the powerful rather than creating definitions, media serve a secondary role. As a result, the dominant class gets to define the social world, providing "the basic rationale for those institutions which reproduce their 'way of life.' This control of mental resources ensures that theirs is the most powerful and 'universal' of the available definitions of the social world." (1978 p. 59). Because these definitions and rationales are made universal, they become naturalized and accepted by the subordinate classes.

## A Note on Method

This analysis focused primarily on articles, editorials, commentaries and letters to the editor concerning *coca production and cocaine trafficking in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru* published in the *Washington Post* between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 1989. Included are 104 articles that fell within the category. Although the war on drugs began long before 1989 and has continued since, the time frame was narrowed to that year for several reasons. Most importantly,1989 is marked by a few dates of importance: George Bush, who had campaigned as a "drug warrior" took office in January; Colombian presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galan was assassinated in August, prompting an "escalation" in both the "war" and news coverage; Colombian Justice Minister Monica de Grieff resigned her post in the face of "death threats" in September; and President Bush took to the podium Sept. 5 to declare war anew, further fueling the escalated news coverage. Further, the volume of coverage has been so great that a longer time period would have provided too much material in such a broadly defined category for a paper of this length.

Because of the event-oriented nature of news, the amount of coverage increased dramatically during periods of increased violence, law-enforcement activity, and legislative debate. Because editorials, analyses and commentaries typically respond to current news, content seemed to follow the old saying "It never rains but it pours"; during periods of "action" there were more columns, editorials and "sidebar" stories per day devoted to the drug war, while during light periods only an occasional story would appear. The effect was that when something became a "problem," it was a big problem, whereas when events seemed to settle down a bit, the "crisis" coverage subsided and the problem no longer seemed important. In regard to this analysis, certain time periods are therefore more heavily represented in the examples given. The most notable escalation of coverage occurred during the months of August and September, corresponding to renewed declarations of "war" by the Colombian government, Colombian drug traffickers, and President Bush.

No quantitative evaluation was made of the news content; rather the text of the articles was examined as a narrative to determine what "story" was being told. Certain questions guided the analysis: Who are the primary definers? What is the problem, according to the accepted definition? What are the accepted solutions? How is the "war" metaphor established and maintained in the news narrative? Who or what is the "enemy"? This information was then evaluated in comparison with "alternative" news or non-news sources of information about the history, political economy and social and cultural aspect of coca and cocaine in the Andean region. This was to establish an idea of what was excluded from the "mainstream" news information.

## Analysis

A look at the primary definers and range of debate in the *Post*'s coverage shows that mainstream media are right in step with President Bush's attempt to frame the drug issue as a "war." The terms "drug war" and "war on drugs" turn up in headlines ("U.S. Aid to Colombia Expands in Drug War" [Aug. 26, Al], "Misfires in the

Drug War"[Sept. 3, C1]), lead sentences ("Two U.S. C-130 cargo planes arrived yesterday as part of the first shipments of a $65-million emergency aid package to help Colombia in its drug war" [Sept. 4, A24]), editorials, commentaries and, as mentioned earlier, the daily index. In addition, words that evoke images of war and violence abound. Headlines, which let readers to know what to expect from a story, are rich with such imagery: "DEA in Bolivia: Guerilla Warfare" (Jan. 16, A1), "Life in the Shadow of Violence Puts Colombians on Edge" (Aug. 31, A1), "Cocaine Cartel Declares 'Total War': Colombian 'Extraditables' Accompany Threats with Explosives" (Aug. 25, A1). Thus the administration's frame of the issue as a "war" can be thought of as the primary definition of debate.

The framing of the issue as a "war" can be useful to the administrations of the United States and the Latin American countries involved. For Peru, Bolivia and Colombia, the perception in the United States that they are "at war" over the issue can help them get much-needed aid dollars. For the United States, the promise of this aid is like a dangling carrot, with an attached "string" of mandatory cooperation with U.S. goals: "The drug issue overrides all other considerations; other real problems are simplified to the point of caricature; pressure is applied to make the country do the bidding of the United States without regard to the consequences of U.S. policies in the country itself" (Gorriti, 1989, p. 74). According to some observers in alternative publications, the drug war provides the United States with a foot in the door for, among other things, counterinsurgency efforts. By linking drug traffickers to insurgents in the U.S. public's mind, the administration would be able to garner support for military intervention that might otherwise be unpopular. (McConahay and Kirk, 1989).

Penny Lernoux, Latin American correspondent for *The Nation* notes: "The ostensible aim of U.S. aid [to Bolivia] is to wipe out the drug traffickers. In fact, the Pentagon is barely interested in coca leaf plantations: Its only concern in the Beni [a department in Bolivia] is to establish an outpost for the U.S. Southern Command, which is based in Panama" (1989, p. 188). Lernoux cites a Southern command document which says the Pentagon planned to use the region as a staging area for rapid troop deployment against insurrections. Despite their appearance in alternative publications, these charges get no mention in the *Post*'s news coverage or on opinion or commentary pages.

As mentioned earlier, the lines between traffickers and insurgents do in fact get blurred in news coverage, as in the case with the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) movement in Peru. According to the coverage, they operate with and in the interests of drug traffickers: "'To some degree these people [the drug traffickers and the guerrillas] are one and the same' said one U.S. antidrug specialist" (Jan. 23, p. A8); "Traffickers have ensconced themselves amid defensive rings of peasants, Shining Path guerrillas, corrupt local officials and politicians..." (editorial, Jan. 24, A22). One op-ed piece even used the phrase "Communist narco-guerrilla bands" in reference to Sendero Luminoso (Sept. 4, A27).

In actuality, however, the relationship between Sendero Luminoso and the traffickers in Peru is much more complex and conflictive (Kawell, 1989a, Gonzalez, 1989). Although Sendero does play a role in the drug trade, it is not allied with the traffickers. Instead, it acts on behalf of the coca growers in the region by forcing cocaine producers to pay fair prices for the coca leaves. Sendero also charges about a "tax" of around 5 percent on all coca paste shipped out of the area and all supplies smuggled in for paste processors. In addition, the group protects peasants who grow coca from government intervention and coca eradication efforts, thus guaranteeing itself support in the region. Its involvement in the drug trade, then, is strategic and benefits growers, not traffickers.

The tendency of news accounts to be fragmented means that the complex relationship between traffickers, coca farmers, and the labor force involved in harvesting the leaf and processing it into cocaine is not represented. Rather, all parties working on the "supply" side of the drug trade (meaning, in this case, all the Latin Americans) are the "enemy" against which the drug war is aimed. In stories about DEA eradication and interdiction efforts in Bolivia and Peru, the terms "growers," "producers" and "traffickers" are used interchangeably when talking about those who produce the leaf and/or process it into coca paste, the first step in making cocaine. In stories about the Colombian cartels and the violence in that country, the terms "drug lords," "drug kingpins" and "drug traffickers" are used interchangeably to mean those at the top of the drug business. Granted, "trafficker" is a somewhat ambiguous term which could mean anyone involved in the trade, but its indiscriminate use and the lack of explanation about how the drug trade operates essentially erase any distinction between drug trade participants and hide the complex interdependencies involved.

In fact, there are differences between those at different levels of the cocaine trade. The drug trade is a very capitalist and imperialist venture. At the top are mostly Colombian "drug lords," in the middle are the farmers and paste producers, and at the bottom are the laborers, who are paid the lowest wages possible (albeit higher than they could get in the legal marketplace) to perform the most menial work. Portraying the cocaine trade as just another business venture, however, would take away some of its mystery and foreignness and diminish the "threat" needed to justify a war.

In addition to the overall "war" definition, frames get re-established by primary definers within each individual news account. In the coverage examined, the main sources were overwhelmingly "officials" of one sort of another. State Department officials or spokespeople, U.S. embassy officials, administration officials, White House officials, Pentagon officials, Defense Department spokespeople, or simple "U.S. officials," "police," or "authorities" figured prominently in almost every story. Occasionally, a news account would refer ambiguously to "a source." Non-official sources are either absent altogether, relegated to the bottom of an article after the official story has been established, or used to provide color, as in one example where a passerby was used to describe the magnitude of a bomb blast (Sept. 1, A20). Non-official sources do occasionally figure prominently in sidebars about "civilian" life amid the war, among other things. For example, impoverished Medellin residents (or "Garbage Dwellers" as the headline referred to them) were the only quoted sources in a story about "Barrio Pablo Escobar," a neighborhood build by a "billionaire drug trafficker," who allows the residents to live there rent- and tax-free. Despite the exceptions, however, official sources are the rule in drug war coverage.

The coverage of the assassination of Colombian presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galan provides a striking example of how primary definers can shape the coverage of an issue. On the day after his death, the *Post* story on the event said he was assassinated "apparently by drug traffickers" (Aug. 20, A1). The story went on to emphasize his campaigns against the drug kingpins, and reported that the killing had prompted President Virgilio Barco to step up actions against suspected traffickers. The story mentions that none of the drug "cartels" claimed responsibility for the slaying. A follow-up the next day stayed within the frame that drug traffickers were responsible (Aug 21, A1).

Seven days later, the *Post* ran another follow-up, which included, about halfway into the story, allegations by a labor leader that right-wing extremists were actually responsible for the slaying because Galan had pledged to open up the country's Liberal and Conservative parties, which are controlled by wealthy, established elites (Aug. 28, A20). The story went on to report that: "A former assistant attorney general, who asked not to be named, said even he doubted that Galan's killing was the work of the drug traffickers. 'Look at who had the most to gain,' the source said. 'It was the right wing that was most interested in Galan's death.'" Subsequent stories referred to the candidate's death exclusively in terms of the drug issue, without questioning the idea that drug traffickers were responsible.

The point here is not who was responsible for Galan's death. Rather, this issue is why an alternate explanation was "marginalized." In subsequent stories, the assassination was referred to as the work of drug traffickers; the allegations otherwise did not get incorporated. In this case, the idea of a drug-related assassination fits into the "web of facticity" surrounding coverage of Colombia because it is in agreement with the primary definition of Colombia's problems as drug-related. This "web of facticity" is useful for the Colombian government and law enforcement sources who set the frame of debate for the story because drug-related incidents back up their requests for more money and arms from the United States, which is perhaps more likely to help fight a drug war that a war against right-wing extremists.

At the heart of the official definition of the drug war is the argument that it is an issues of morality. The "enemy" in the drug war, whether drugs or people, is evil because it is immoral, and any attempt to fight it is good because it is moral. This characterization serves a political purpose, according to Edelman: "To define the people one hurts as evil is to define oneself as virtuous" (1988, P. 76). The assertion of morality lies beneath the text, so to speak, of the news accounts. In other words, most stories do not include official statements explicitly citing morality, but the assumption that fighting drug use or trafficking is right and that engaging in these activities is wrong is what the drug war is all about. The issue is defined in terms of a moral imperative to fight the drug problem, therefore the debate focuses on strategy. Any argument that questions whether drugs themselves are the root of the problem rather than a symptom of a larger problem that should be addressed is disadvantaged because, according to the boundaries of debate, drugs are bad, and therefore they are a problem. Similarly, calls for legalization as a solution to the crime and violence that accompany drug trafficking can be dismissed on the grounds of immorality.

Editorials and commentaries do, however, explicitly make this assumption. For example, in one commentary Corrine Schmidt, a former foreign service officer who agrees with the premise of the drug war but disagrees with the strategy, says "Like their leaders, the (Peruvian coca) growers know what they're doing is wrong. But in the debate between morality and hunger, hunger inevitably wins out" (Sept 3, 1989., p. C1). Another commentator, Stephen S. Rosenfield, also invoked the morality issue: "Producing and consuming countries have an implicit political and moral contract to fight the drug scourge together" (Aug. 4 1989, P. A23).

Schmidt's assertion that coca growers "know what they're doing is wrong" assumes that Peruvian peasants share the same notions of morality that are assumed to be accepted in the United States. The magnitude of coca eradication efforts in Peru certainly clues them in that what they are doing is frowned upon by officials, but studies of indigenous culture in the Andes suggest that coca, rather than being immoral, serves as a symbol of cultural identity to Andean people. According to researcher Catherine J. Allen, coca chewing plays a vital role in social relations in Andean cultures and is "the medium of communication with the powerful and unpredictable earth deities on and among whom they live" (1986, p. 41). In addition, coca's medicinal effects help mountain dwellers survive in their physiologically stressful high-altitude environment. Coca leaves also have been found to contain high amounts of essential nutrients, so they may play a dietary role as well. (Duke, et al., 1975, cited in Plowman, 1986). In short, assertions of "morality" in media accounts effectively eliminate the history of the people at the "source" of cocaine and reduces them to the status of "enemy."

In the *Post*'s coverage, references to the importance of coca to Peruvian and Bolivian Indians are few, the most notable of which was in a letter to the editor, (Sept. 14, p. A22) the most common place for oppositional or alternative views. Another reference problematized the word traditional: "... a crop elsewhere will be permitted for 'traditional' religious rites and medicinal uses" (Jan. 16, pp. A1, A4). The use of quotation marks casts some doubt on the idea that coca use is a true tradition, suggesting some other motive.

The morality issue also obscures the fact that coca production is often the only, or at least the most promising, means of support for peasants in the highlands of Bolivia and Peru. The *Post*'s coverage does contain references to "thousands of people in the [Upper Huallaga] valley who depend on coca for their livelihood" (Sept. 20, A28), but there is little explanation as to the depth of the coca economy. For many Bolivian and Peruvian peasants, coca is one of the few agricultural products that provides an income above production costs. "There is no other crop that can compete with the leaf, yield up to six harvests a year and is always paid in cash" (Strug, 1986, p. 78). Eradication of the plant or a total crackdown on trade would have severe repercussions in both countries. "In Bolivia, this segment of the population which gains part or all of its income from coca and cocaine-related activities is larger than employed by the mining and manufacturing industries combined." In recent years, cocaine revenues have exceeded revenues for any of Bolivia's major exports, including tin. (Healy, 1986, p. 110). The situation in Peru is similar, although some estimates indicate that it produces twice as much coca as Bolivia (Strug, 1986, p. 82).

Accompanying the moral premise behind the drug war is the idea that drug traffickers are inherently violent. "In wartime, hysterical phrases, such as 'the enemy will stop at nothing' and 'they even target children' push nations beyond law and morality" (Brauer, 1990, p. 705). Words like "narco-terrorists," "kingpins" and "drug barons" are used repeatedly, conjuring up images of violence and the underworld. In one story a "prominent Colombian" was quoted describing drug traffickers: "People cannot imagine how ruthless and violent these people are, how well trained and well equipped. They are not a regular army, not even a guerilla army. They have an army of trained assassins. How do you stop them when they want to kill you?" (Aug. 25, pp. A1, A14).

This indictment of "them" may miss part of the picture, however. Usually the "they" meant in these violent portrayals is the "lower-class" of drug kingpins, those like Pablo Escobar who grew up in poverty and made it big in the drug trade. Bruce Bagley describes the difference:

> There are at least two kinds of drug dealers in Colombia; there may be others. One type is the nouveau riche--those people who have used drugs as an avenue toward upward mobility, and who, in seeking political protection, have

> sought to buy political power and social status. They're the easy targets for the Colombian government because they're easily identified, they've been the most flamboyant, and they're the ones who've indulged in the kinds of activities which have received media coverage. There is, however, another segment of drug lords in Colombia, one that has kept a much lower profile and is far more intertwined with the existing political and social system within the country. It includes a number of families who can trace their roots back to the Conquest itself....(1986, p. 99)

These elite drug traffickers, according to Bagley, have served in elected offices and provide political protection for the "lower-class" traffickers. They themselves, however, have escaped harm in the crackdowns because of their place in the power structure. Essentially, then, the "enemy" in the drug war is constructed along class lines. This information is absent in the *Post*'s portrayals.

Another part of the picture that gets lost in the "filters" is why drug traffickers are so violent. According to the portrayals, it is inherent; it is just the way the drug traffickers are. First and foremost, however, drug traffickers are capitalists; they are trying to maximize their profits by selling their product at the highest possible price while keeping costs low. They have no reason for violence--unless something steps in the way of profit. The violent response of the drug traffickers is not unprecedented among capitalist enterprises. Corporations have been known to use violence to break strikes, and several have relied on U.S.-backed military coups to protect their interests, as was the case with the United Fruit Company and the 1954 overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala. The point that the drug violence is caused by the illegality of drugs and the resulting crackdowns is not raised in news coverage. Rather, "get tough" measures by police and the government are often portrayed as a response to drug-traffickers' violence.

The evil drug trafficker fits with Murray Edelman's concept of how an enemy must be constructed: "Enemies are characterized by an inherent trait or set of traits that marks them as evil, immoral, warped, or pathological and therefore a continuing threat regardless or what course of action they pursue, regardless of whether they win or lose in any particular encounter, and even if they take no political action at all" (1988, p. 67).

## Conclusion

Perhaps the biggest point of criticism against the drug war coverage was not what it contained, but what it left out. Reliance on official sources has resulted in lack of consideration for the economic, cultural and political forces at work, giving a simplistic image, which reinforces the metaphor of war: drugs, traffickers and/or violence are the enemy while police, military and other officials are fighting to restore order. Adhering to the war frame keeps the debate centered on issues of strategy over re-evaluations the issue and its foundations, making this news appear more like propaganda geared toward mobilizing support for the war effort than information from which readers could form reasonable opinions. In addition, framed as a problem of stopping drugs from entering the United States, the problems and policy imperatives of this country are given precedence over those of Latin American nations, reinforcing the historical tendency of the United States to claim a right to intervene in and dominate Latin America according to U.S. interests. Reinforcing this is the lack of any discussion of power relationships and economic circumstances within which the "news" operated, the stories stressed violence or threats of violence and relied on a simplified good vs. bad formula.

Any oppositions to the purposes or strategies of the "drug war" were absent or marginalized, that is, they appeared and disappeared but did not become incorporated into the parameters of debate. Because government officials essentially told the "story" of the drug war in the pages of the *Post*, alternative agendas were outside debate, which was framed in moral grounds. Because the debate was confined to strategies on fighting the drug war and the news coverage provided images and threats of violence to back up the assertion that a drug war was needed, the whole scenario served to reinforce the authority of the officials telling the story. Thus, the media coverage carries no threat to the legitimacy of the the institutions and power structures (within which the media that operate).

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# The Challenge of Bearing Witness in Political Reporting: Making the Public Conversational Partners

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# The Challenge of Bearing Witness in Political Reporting: Making the Public Conversational Partners

Doctors are to heal bodies, and journalists are to tell stories. Both of these professionals are supposedly "objective" in their undertakings and usually do not take sides on issues outside their special domains. However, some doctors -- most notably the Medecins Sans Frontieres (M.S.F., Doctors Without Borders) -- are changing the meaning of the word "heal" to "bearing witness" (Hunt, 1991). M.S.F. is a modern medical relief organization that dispatches emergency medical teams to places of fighting and war, places where other relief organizations often will not go. They are different from other relief organizations because they do more than "objectively" heal; they bear witness by attempting to stop the injustice that causes the carnage by speaking out publicly. Is their behavior a model for journalists who wish to redefine the function of the media? Can media use the bearing witness model for political reporting without becoming partisan? This essay explores the possibility of changing political reporting by examining journalists' responsibility and function in political campaigns.

None of the ideas explored in this essay reject objectivity totally as a value, but the "bearing witness" political reporting model justifies media's responsibility to inform citizens of what their government and other centers of power are doing and then to promote discussion of ideas. Just as the French doctors alert the world to agony they have witnessed, journalists need to improve political conversation to increase justice by helping place the topics of poverty and racism on the national agenda. Making citizens conversational partners is a necessary part of bearing witness for the powerless and poor. Discussion of this challenge will focus on exploring the following questions: 1) Is there a need for improved political reporting? 2) Can "bearing witness" be reconciled with the values of objectivity and responsibility? 3) What are current professional obstacles to bearing witness? 4) What are the methods for the future? 5) Will there be improvement in 1992?

## Is there a need for improved political reporting?

Voting participation in American presidential elections continues to decrease with the United States falling far behind West Germany, Sweden, and Italy's voting participation percentages (Teixeira, 1987). Although this noninvolvement trend may not be alarming in itself, it is distressing when combined with the pressing issues of economic woes and continued racism in our society. Participation and understanding of the political process is important to allow voices to be heard so that these issues remain on the public and government agendas. The percentage of our working poor continues to grow. In 1987, the working poor made up 41.5 percent of all poor people, the fastest growing group among the poor (Harrington, 1987). Nearly 60 percent of the 20 million people who now fall below the Census Bureau's poverty line come from families with at least one full-time or part-time worker (Reich, 1990). Children make up the poorest age group in the United States. In 1986, 22.1 percent of all children under the age of six were poor. Of these poor children, children of color bear a disproportionate share of poverty burden. Also, the government's health insurance for the poor covers only 42 percent of all poor families (Harrington).

The gap between the very poor and the very rich continues to widen. A March 1992 *New York Times* article reported that the richest 1 percent of American families "reaped most of the gains from the prosperity of the last decade and a half" (Nasar, March 5). From 1977 to 1989, pretax income of the top 1 percent of families grew 77 percent with the top fifth growing 29 percent. The 4th fifth's income shrunk 1 percent, and the bottom fifth's pretax income shrunk 9 percent.

The economic problems of the "middle class and working classes" already have received much attention from candidates and journalists in 1992 election coverage. However, the 1992 election may begin the "suburban century" with nearly one half of the United State's population residing in suburbs (Schneider, 1992). Schneider warns that political parties will focus on the suburban voter and ignore cities and their problems. The increase of poverty and continuance of racism in America should not be overlooked in the campaign as Americans wrestle with the realities of a political system that often does not dispense justice. If Rawls' assertion that "justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought" (1971, p. 3) is true, then the injustice of poverty and racism should be corrected in our society. To be corrected, government has to be alerted continually to the problems and the fact that many citizens want these problems solved. The Los Angeles riots brought some injustice issues to the front burner of public discussion. However, improving voter apathy may be a first step in changing discussion into public policy.

Boylan (1991) says that present apathetic voters may indeed be making a political statement -- "they see no connection between their vote and their political interests" -- that needs to be heeded by the political leaders of our country. The 1990 midterm election continued a trend where only a little more than one in three potential voters voted. Boylan suggests that journalism no longer is part of the public process. Polls and consultants have replaced going to the voters. But it is time for journalism once again to become a positive part of the public process.

### Can "bearing witness" be reconciled with objectivity and responsibility?

Bearing witness from the French doctors' viewpoint can be defined as overcoming dispassionate silence, alerting the world to agony the doctors witness, condemning oppression, and combating oppression by informing the world of injustice. To them, these actions are a positive act of responsibility. Doctors traditionally have been disinterested, yet responsible, a model similar to that of most journalists. The M.S.F. is changing that model for doctors. They are "impelled by the duty to speak out against the suffering they witness and to go where other groups will not" (Hunt, p. 32). Some critics say this action makes the medical group too political and lessens the professional and supposedly detached role of doctors mandated in the Hippocratic oath. However, members of M.S.F. claim that they are haunted by World War II and the objective silence by the International Red Cross when it did not denounce Nazi extermination camps.

This act of bearing witness -- or alerting the world and condemning oppression --could also be a positive responsibility for journalists. Most American journalists probably have no problem with accepting that they should bear witness under horrible war conditions. However, most work in the United States under peaceful and plush conditions and face the challenge of reporting injustices of a different type -- poverty and racism.

Needless to say, the act of breaking silence usually is not a problem for journalists. Rather, their challenge is using their abilities to articulate issues in a positive, responsible way to increase political and voter participation while retaining "objectivity" in reporting. Politicians, political parties, and government leaders also have these responsibilities, but only the journalist's role is examined in this essay.

I suggest that bearing witness is the act of not only witnessing an event or trend but also combining Hodges' (1986) political, educational, and cultural functions of the press to affect political change. Media already have many of the tools available that can increase political participation such as mobilizing information, precision journalism, and rehearsal of information. But some objectivity conventions do damage political reporting.

## Objectivity

Objective reporting is defined as putting aside prejudices and values and striving for fair and balanced news (Sandman, Rubin, Sachsman, 1982, p. 83). However, Herbert Gans (1980) says that even objectivity is itself a value and that "enduring values are built into news judgment; as a result, most values and opinions enter unconsciously" (p. 182).

Objectivity was not always the ideal for American journalism. In the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth, newspapers were extremely partisan (Schudson, 1978). With the advent of the first wire service in the 1840s and the need to make reporting acceptable to all political allegiances, objectivity became an expected style of writing for wire stories. Eventually, local reporters began to copy the objectivity model of the wire service in local stories. In the 1930s, the United States went off the gold standard, and Roosevelt sent his advisers to help journalists explain events to citizens. Interpretive reporting, with explanation and analysis of facts, was born.

Journalists have developed reporting conventions to assure readers or viewers that the story is fair and balanced or that both sides of an issue are told if possible. Usually, sources are named because not naming them makes the paper lose its credibility and opens the door to charges of prejudice or use of incompetent sources (Brooks et al., 1988, pp. 130-131). Another ostensibly "fair" technique is labeling opinion and analysis as such.

Critics challenge objectivity's validity as an ideology for all news. Sandman et al. call objectivity a false god. Tuchman says objectivity is a "strategic ritual" (Tuchman in Sandman, Rubin, Sachsman, p. 84), and Schudson (1978) suggests that objectivity is a myth with three specific criticisms (pp. 184-185). First, news story content is shaped by the backgrounds and culture of the reporters and editors. This affects coverage in 1992 because most reporters and editors have not experienced poverty and racism. However, perhaps the largest obstacle to conveying political news is the fact that journalists are unnaturally steeped in information. They are news junkies and know how to get needed information to take part in the democratic process. If they cannot find the local meeting place of a caucus in the paper, they will call an election board. Journalists' culture is news, and they often have difficulty relating to those who do not have the time, energy, know-how, or financial resources to utilize available information to make a political decision.

A second criticism of objectivity by Schudson is that the form of the story itself is not objective because certain conventions must be followed. The form is biased because it is restricted to statements of observable facts. This traditionally has allowed journalists to print what someone said without discussing its veracity. In traditional news stories, campaign speeches are printed because they "truly" happened; however, often the "truth" of the rhetoric is not examined except in opinion pages buried in some other section of the paper.

The vocabulary and narrative style of news stories are broad and impersonal. For example "say" is used rather than "insist." Other professional traditions include valuing conflicts and events more than processes and using the inverted pyramid, a news-writing formula in which information is arranged in descending order of importance because the reader may stop reading at any time and editors cut from the bottom when a story needs to be shortened (Brooks et al., p. 57). Also, the news story format caters to the powerful who can control or stage events such as press conferences. This obviously places the poor and minorities at a disadvantage.

Schudson's third criticism of objectivity is that a news story not only is a literary form but also a social form that is constrained by the routines of news gathering, and "the process of news gathering itself constructs an image of reality which reinforces official viewpoints" (Schudson, p. 185). For example, news gathering must be swift, often relying on official government sources and other "legitimate" sources such as candidate headquarters to hasten information gathering. These sources, however, often encourage the status quo and discourage public discussion.

Debate continues whether objectivity is truly possible in presenting news stories. Stocking and LaMarca (1990) conclude from a study of newspaper reporters that reporters usually have hypotheses in mind when starting a story. In cognitive psychology, gathering and selecting information that confirms rather than disconfirms a hypothesis is known as "confirmation bias" (p. 295). The authors suggest that "confirmation bias" places stumbling blocks because it is difficult "to entertain a specific alternative when one personally embraces a hypothesis than it is when one entertains it at an emotional distance" (p. 301). In other words, it's a formidable task for reporters who usually have preconceived ideas to examine alternatives. Stocking and LaMarca give the example of a reporter told by a teacher that early childhood specialists disagreed whether kindergarten was a time for academic rigor or building of social skills. Since the source said teachers were either in one camp or the other, the reporter wanted to explain both sides but was not interested in testing whether teachers were indeed polarized or whether there were more than two sides. Stocking and LaMarca add that it is "difficult to entertain specific, competing hypotheses in instances where the weight of the evidence suggests that the competing hypothesis is wrong, or where the alternative means the possibility of no story or a lesser story" (p. 301).

Most media outlets don't have the luxury of allowing a reporter to spend a large amount of time researching a story only to find that there is no conflict or new angle. Although the investigating process is important, it is a fact of life that the presses run and the television cameras roll each day whether or not the reporter depicts conflict in the story. An article may appear that is weak because space and time need to be filled. Also, articles about trends are difficult to shape to the traditional story line's literary shape of exposition, conflict, climax, and denouement. In the media, process takes a back seat to product.

Abandoning objectivity is not desirable and could mean the return of politically-controlled papers, a problem because economics has forced the demise of competing newspapers in many markets. Political news continues to require many objectivity conventions because audiences demand speed. However, new methods need to improve political reporting to compensate for objectivity's limitations while still retaining fairness and accuracy. Citizens need to be treated as partners rather than patrons. Their information needs must be addressed by asking such questions as: What are the trends not being discussed by politicians and government? What problems did our station or paper cover in the past that still are not solved? What are ways that citizens can get involved in the solutions of these problems? Do citizens have adequate information to get involved?

## Responsibility

The obligation of responsibility, often prefaced with "social," is feared by many journalists because it is believed that responsibility leads to accounting. The theory of social responsibility's major premise -- credited to the 1947 Commission on Freedom of the Press or Hutchins Commission -- was that press freedom carries the obligation of responsibility "to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communications in contemporary society" (Peterson, in Siebert, Peterson, Schramm, 1963, p. 74). The five suggested "shoulds" of social responsibility by the Hutchins Commission were: 1) Provide a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning, 2) Provide a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism, 3) Provide a representative picture of the constituent groups in society, 4) Be responsible for the presentation and clarification of the goals and values of society, and 5) Provide full access to the day's intelligence. (Sandman et al., p. 176). If followed, these "shoulds" convert media into major conduits for understanding our social and political culture. Hodges (1986) says that a responsible press performs four functions or social roles (p. 21), giving the media a positive direction. First, the political function of the press is to inform citizens of what its government and other centers of power are doing -- monitoring the centers of political, economic, and social power. Second, the educational role promotes discussion of ideas, opinions, and truths, or "the tradition of the town meeting." Third, the press relays information about what is happening in the community, a utility or bulletin board function. Finally, the press has a social or cultural function by holding a mirror to society and reflecting values. None of these functions requires journalists to endorse political viewpoints, but one can inform, educate, and expose responsibly without endorsement.

Hodges distinguishes between responsibility and accountability. Responsibility is the answer to the question: "To what social needs should we expect journalists to respond ably?" Accountability asks: "How might society call on journalists to account for their performance of the responsibilities given them?" (p. 14). Hodges says responsibility defines proper conduct, while accountability compels it. This distinction is important because this essay is not suggesting that the press be accountable "to" someone for improving its political coverage, but rather, as Hodges says, the press should remain free and be responsible "for" its coverage. However, the media is accountable to the public because of market demands.

### What current professional practices act as obstacles to bearing witness?

Some critics feel the media simply are not good conveyors of political information. Hallin (1988) suggests that often analysis of political topics is filtered through questions of strategy, effectiveness, and technique because discussion of those topics does not appear to depart from disinterested professionalism (p. 130). Thus we get a horse-race angle on political debates or issues. Hallin cites the example of coverage of David Stockman, Reagan's budget director, who conceded in an interview that the numbers of Reagan's trickle-down economics were dubious. Media focused on Stockman's survival -- or effectiveness -- not an analysis of the policy of trickle-down economics.

In a study of the 1976 presidential election, Patterson (1980) raises doubts about the press as an effective institution to convey political information. He concludes, "Although the press is not monolithic in how events are reported, it is in which events are covered" (p. 100). Patterson explains that the press is expected to organize voter choices. He says this responsibility falls on the press for several reasons -- an electoral system built upon numerous primaries, self-generated candidacies, and weak party leaders. Of the responsibility to sort out all the candidates, Patterson says: "It is an unworkable arrangement. . . . it is much less adequate as a linking mechanism than is commonly assumed. The problem is that the press is not a political institution and has no stake in organizing public opinion" (p. 173).

Patterson also stresses that media do not have the same incentives as political parties to link candidates with voters. The nature of election reporting makes the press a non-political institution. Election news contains more action and differences than policy and leadership questions. Patterson claims that problems with campaigns are the party system's problems and that the deterioration of the party as the link is not the media's problem -- although the media can recognize how it exaggerates those weaknesses. He suggests improving the system by shortening the campaign, grouping more state contests, and relying more on caucuses. Even if Patterson's suggestions were followed, media would need to effectively cover those political reforms.

Wattenberg (1990) echoes the party deterioration theme and says open caucuses and primaries give the nomination process to the public at large and to the mass media. As a result, coverage of parties is often de-emphasized and a candidate-centered view of presidential campaigns has increased, as shown in a content analysis of election coverage between 1952-1980. This candidate-centered coverage can lessen public debate on issues.

Another way participation has been lessened is excessive media reliance on polling either as a resource or as a reporting tool. Ginsberg (1986) charges that polling can affect both the beliefs of individuals asked to respond to survey questions and the attitudes of those who read a survey's results. "Thus the major impact of polling is the way polls cumulate and translate individuals' private beliefs into collective public opinion" (p. 62). Boyte asserts that polls are people's private reflexes, but polls are not public judgment (Boyte in Boylan, p. 34).

For candidates, polling has replaced alternative, more traditional methods of gauging public opinion such as letters to the editor, reading local newspapers, touring districts, and talking with voters. On the surface, it would appear that polling is a more efficient way of increasing involvement. But Ginsberg (1986) asserts that because of polling the public is now more amenable to governmental control because officials can make decisions based on polling and claim their decisions are supported by the public, often shortening debate. Thus, officials believe that "they are working in a more permissive climate of opinion than might have been thought on the basis of alternative indicators of the popular mood" (p. 65). This trend was seen in the Gulf War with political leaders' reliance on polls to show public support to bolster their tactics. Ginsberg also suggests that expressing an opinion in a poll takes less energy and commitment than opinion initiated by citizens, and public opinion moves from a property of groups to an attribute of individuals. Lavrakas et al. assert that polling had a direct effect on voting intent in the 1988 election. According to their research, about one in five registered nonvoters may not have voted because they were influenced by preelection polls' prediction of a Bush victory.

Media's excessive reliance on self-generated polls also decreases space and time spent on issues and one-on-one contact with community members to determine their opinions and needs. In late 1991, the Columbia *Missourian* commissioned a poll to predict the outcome of a tax initiative -- Proposition B. The poll wrongly forecast the outcome of the election, predicting passage of the proposition or at least a close vote. Instead, the proposition lost 70-30 percent. Perhaps money spent on conducting the poll could have been better spent sending reporters to the metropolitan and rural areas of the state to gauge the climate through interviews. Even though this method of reporting is more expensive and time consuming, and may in fact not be more accurate, it does return ownership of opinions to individuals rather than faceless percentages.

Obviously, the media cannot fulfill their political and educational functions to everybody's satisfaction. But in the foreseeable future, there is no practical alternative to relying on them as political parties decline. Media face the challenge of involving more citizens in decisions affecting their everyday lives because American society is changing to a society of haves and have-nots. Noninvolvement may widen the rift between the rich and poor because government may operate only by the elite for the interested few. Curtis Gans (1988) suggests that nonparticipation also threatens democracy because government forms policy not in the general interest. He says that nonparticipation will lead to a lack of cohesion and increase of demagoguery and authoritarianism (p. 100). Gans' premise that decreased participation decreases quality government should be accepted by the media, and then media need to accept the challenge of increasing participation.

Christians (1986) calls this need for media to aid participation more a duty than a challenge. He believes the press must promote justice because the powerless have few avenues of expression. "Shouldn't the communications media be the channel of today's impoverished, so their complaints and pleas for mercy will rise above the noise of a busy and complicated nation?" (p. 111). But the "channels" must understand the nature of improved political reporting, and Boylan suggests reporters themselves don't have a good sense of what good political news should be. Reporters often think "facts" are knowledge. He cites a poll of American students who were reported not to "know" much about current affairs because they didn't know the date of Earth Day or the name of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He finds that this supposed importance of knowing "facts" is alarming because citizens shouldn't look to the press for correct answers but as raw material for argument, and the press shouldn't think of news as a jumble of unconnected facts (p. 35). Understanding broad concepts and issues is more important. Carey suggests that the public needs to be reawakened and can be so "when they are addressed as a conversational partner and are encouraged to join the talk rather than sit passively as spectators before a discussion conducted by journalists and experts" (Carey in Boylan, p. 35).

## What methods for the future?

If the public is to be "addressed as a conversational partner," what are the methods that reporters can use to encourage political conversation and thus involvement? I do not interpret political conversation to mean only that media must open their pages and airwaves more to citizens' viewpoints such as letters to the editor, even though that may be a desirable action in itself. Rather, media can encourage political conversation in the community by expanding citizens' awareness so they can critically analyze issues and then respond to community and political leaders and let their opinions be known. Media will bear witness by alerting the public to the need for change and by speaking for the disenfranchised citizens who have lost their voices in the political process. Also, media must be willing to involve the audience by listening to citizens "talk about the news" through structured interviews and by discovering how audiences interpret news stories (Jensen, 1987). Media need to understand more about how citizens learn and use media outlets.

Graber (1988) suggests citizens learn from the media by processing information according to schemata or outlines. Citizens know what kind of information to absorb from childhood socializations. New information is condensed and simplified for brief storage in short-term memory, becomes part of a data pool, and then is checked against memory schemata to determine whether it can be integrated. Knowing these schemata can change how political information is shaped. Three factors produce mismatches in assimilating political information: cognitive bluntness -- citizen lacks information; emotional bluntness -- strong emotions like anger or fear about the subject block listening; and ideological bluntness -- citizen cannot interpret new information because it's remote from beliefs (p. 158). Thus, it may be difficult for media consumers to process all information. Graber does believe, however, that average Americans are capable of "extracting enough meaningful political information from the flood of news to which they are exposed to perform the moderate number of citizenship functions that American society expects of them" (p. 252).

She adds, "Our findings indicate that people calculate the cost of processing the news in terms of time and effort. They prefer a process that saves time and simplifies the complexities of political learning" (p. 259). Media consumers use the inverted pyramid style of news writing because it allows efficiency in winnowing information (p. 249). Graber believes more repetition would be helpful for retention. She says:

> Rehearsal of information retards decay. For instance, election information learned at various times during the campaign was beyond recall until it was rehearsed during the

> presidential debates. Hence the journalistic habit of repeating the same information periodically refreshes memory and prevents information loss. (p. 259)

Graber adds that these "rehearsals" may be crucial just before voting to "refresh previously learned information when most needed for decision making."

However, Graber's "rehearsal of information" practice often is forgotten in the heat of a political campaign. Two critiques of the 1988 campaign appearing in *New York* (1988) and *Newsweek* (1988) note that both television and print failed to reiterate information. Diamond, author of the *New York* article, suggests that the exploratory character studies done by television early in the political season should be repeated closer to election when less attentive voters start to tune in. The *Newsweek* article acknowledges the presence of in-depth profiles, but counters that the analyses appeared early in the campaign and few media organizations reran the profiles. "Trouble was, most voters weren't really paying attention the first time around. The result was that for all the reams of coverage, millions cast their ballots without knowing much about the backgrounds of the two men" (p. 26).

A first practical step would simply be to rerun some of the articles and programs. Other analysis articles/programs may need updating and rewriting so early attentive readers/viewers are not bored. This repetition of analysis closer to the elections could help guard against the ending flurry of negative campaign ads from both political sides.

To assure success with rehearsal of information, journalists need to write concrete information early. Researchers suggest that even more political information needs to be gathered during the primary. Yum and Kendall (1988) observe that voters seek more information from a greater number of sources during a primary political campaign. Patterson (1980) finds that impressions from the primaries remained with voters throughout the campaign. These are good reasons to start the analysis early and not let up at the end.

Another reporting aid to help convert citizens into conversational partners is Lemert's (1981) concept of Mobilizing Information. MI can help citizens act on attitudes they already have. MI includes names of people and organizations promoting a point of view so they can be contacted, meeting times and places of legislative hearings, or names of legislators with information on how to contact them. In a political campaign, it could include phone numbers of local or national party headquarters.

Lemert suggests three kinds of MI -- locational, which provides information about time and place for an activity such as voter registration announcements; identificational, which involves both names, addresses, and phone numbers and enough locational MI to enable persons to recognize and/or contact the person, groups, or entity identified (pp. 119-121); and tactical, which instructs citizens like "service journalism" in how to behave to improve their lives. An example of nonpolitical service journalism is an article about getting checkups to prevent breast cancer or strokes. A service political story might discuss ways citizens can join city government commissions to increase participation in making local laws. MI is not a mobilizing message such as "Join now!" intended to energize participation, but rather it is information that can be used in different ways (p. 139).

Lemert suggests that for most political action, it is not enough just to know the name of the politician. "We must be able to contact him. Elites may already know how to write to their congressional representatives, for example, but many persons would feel at a loss in knowing how to address their letters, even if they knew the name of their representative" (p. 122).

Lemert asserts that journalists hesitate giving MI in news of political controversies but have no problems in providing it in other cases. The health- and family-related lifestyle articles run sidebars or final paragraphs with addresses and phone numbers of where to go for help. This information usually is absent in political articles because of three professional craft attitudes. First, journalists feel MI is partisan and fear libel action or pressures from advertisers. Journalists cannot reconcile objectivity with MI. Second, journalists see MI as dull detail, and they cut out MI such as addresses in their reliance on the inverted pyramid and on wire stories. Finally, Lemert asserts that public affairs journalists are issue-centered and have leftist concerns with a special target audience that already knows plenty about politics. They mistake words for deeds. Lemert calls this "an absent-minded impracticality that confuses informing or educating the mass media audience about issues with informing them about how to do something with the attitudes and information they have acquired" (p. 139). Lemert suggests that MI is a way of increasing participation. Media can supply all the background and issue articles possible, but people will still feel fear and uneasiness about participating in the political process until they are given tools of power and action such as MI provides them.

One stage of the political process where providing MI could be particularly helpful is the nomination stage. Since caucuses/primaries change form in many states every four years, voters need MI about location, site, and how the local nomination process fits in with the national election. In a preliminary study of Missouri community newspapers and their use of MI regarding the March 1992 Democratic caucus, I concluded that some community papers contained very little local coverage of the caucus -- including meeting place -- until the day *after* the nominating event (Speckman, 1992).

Can reporters incorporate MI and remain objective and fair? Dennis (1988) notes that politically "fair" stories must have coherent representation of the facts; context and background that provides connections to the past and to concurrent issues, events, and personalities; more systematic information-gathering; quality control of information (making it clear whether information is being cited and quoted with approval or not); and more equitable sense-making and interpretation (p. 10). So yes, media can maintain accuracy by providing MI for all sides and thus serve both fairness and justice.

However, providing MI takes valuable reporter time, which media managers must be willing to provide. Another problem is the control of many major and local media by media giants and chains. Some critics charge that the monetary "bottom line" is all important and hence less emphasis is given to local news. This trend could make providing MI for local or state politics difficult.

Providing MI also can be difficult because of the shrinking "news hole" or news space in newspapers. Neuman (1986) estimates that only 4 percent of the total newspaper is political news. Another study shows that in 1976, 51 percent of that 4 percent of political news in newspapers focused on campaign events rather than issues. Also 63 percent of television political news stories covered events over issues. "A rich diversity of political coverage, including in-depth analysis of issues and policy, does indeed exist, but it is only a small trickle in the broader media tide," Neuman says (pp. 135-137).

Ideally, with more MI and more emphasis on issues and background as suggested by Dennis, political reporting would improve. However, Carey (1976) asserts from his analysis of election-related news of the 1974 congressional elections that those essentials often are ignored, and instead media concentrate on meta-campaigning, that is, an attempt is made to demonstrate the candidates' competence as campaign organizers and strategists. Carey says news coverage treats the campaign "as a strategic game or contest, much like coverage of sports. . . . The message is: it's a game, and good players make good public officials" (pp. 56-57). The viewer and reader do not "see" issues as important in a meta-campaign. Rather they learn that the candidate is skilled at playing games.

The preoccupation with meta-campaigning continued in the 1988 presidential election, and meta-campaigning emphasis became an obsession. "Time after time, the real question -- how the candidates might govern as president -- was lost amid discussion of who had a better day playing to the cameras on the hustings" (How the Media Blew It, *Newsweek*, p. 24). Diamond (1988) also notes that stories about the campaign "process" seem to be in the news more than traditional issues, and he observes that "professors who profess to be experts in the efficacy of television commercials were interviewed more frequently than experts on foreign policy" (p. 27).

This tendency to judge a campaigner on skills other than stands on issues is especially prevalent in our emphasis on television debates. In televised debates, questions of issue give way to which candidate is more likeable, especially in commentaries from broadcast journalists. Leon and Allen (1990) observe that journalists emphasized the candidates' abilities to utilize the television medium ("I noticed how Dukakis played to the camera . . .") and used sports metaphors ("knockout punch thrown") in their analyses. To remedy this, they recommend content analysis, a precision journalism tool which can analyze political addresses and campaign debates. Content analysis can be used to test whether candidates are addressing voter concerns by using computer programs that can measure general content in addition to style, themes, metaphors, and imagery. For example, one computer program determines which candidate's agenda was being discussed in the debate using "competence" and "ideology" vocabularies (p. 18). Content analysis, according to Leon and Allen, would be difficult to do minutes after a debate. However, the analyses could be used by both print and broadcast journalist for later reporting.

Media's emphasis on conflict also can hamper quality political writing. Patterson points out that election news carries scenes of action and emphasizes what is different about events of the previous 24 hours rather than everyday political topics. However, he says that election news is important because it enlists voters' interest in the campaign, keeps them abreast of election activity, and makes them aware of facts that might otherwise be hidden. "But the news is not an adequate guide to political choice. The candidates' agendas are not readily evident in press coverage of the campaign" (p. 174).

## Will there be improvement in 1992?

Media continue to wrestle with improving political coverage in the 1992 campaign with more emphasis on issue reporting and such devices as more debates during the primaries and giving free air time to an independent candidate. Television appears to be taking a larger role in exposing citizens to candidates with some superficial attempts to increase political conversation with "call-in" shows. However, it is too early to characterize the 1992 coverage as it *jumps* back and forth between focusing on issues and focusing on bedrooms. Some attempts to involve more citizens are happening. For example, *Discovery Channel*'s granting of 20 minutes to each primary candidate to explain his stance is a strong example of positive responsibility in aiding citizen conversation on a national level.

Locally, citizens in 1992 need to understand how to participate in a caucus or primary. The rival general circulation newspapers in Columbia, Missouri, approached the participation problem in different ways. Both papers attempted to give necessary caucus information before Super Tuesday because Missouri had not held a caucus since 1984.

The afternoon *Columbia Tribune* promised a special section on the caucuses in its Sunday edition. Indeed, the Sunday issue had a front-page article about showing up early for the caucuses before the doors closed and some basic information about how caucuses are different from primaries. The article mentioned that because of redistricting voters would have to call their election board to find out where the caucuses were held and in which new district voters now were. The election board number and caucus locations were NOT given for Sunday subscribers. Locations were, however, listed in the Monday edition.

The morning *Columbia Missourian* reported several weeks early about the caucuses and at first listed meetings only at two wards, giving the impression that there would only be a few places where caucuses would be held. This was incomplete information, which can be as misleading as no information. To the *Missourian's* credit, however, the Sunday edition before the caucus contained a lengthy section on the caucuses -- including all the caucus meeting places for the county. This section was buried in "Issues" -- a separate tabloid-sized section that contains opinion columns and features. I only found the special feature late in the day after I had read everything else. Anybody other than an admitted news junkie probably would not have found the mobilizing information. Promoting the section on the front page would have been helpful. Instead, the only Sunday front-page political story before Super Tuesday *was a tongue-in-cheek assessment from the New York Times News Service on what the* candidates would have been like in high school. Although the article was entertaining, it was not informative. Ironically, one of the locally-written articles in the special caucus section focused on the disadvantages/advantages of caucuses and ended with a quote from a local political leader that low representation is not necessarily bad. He said that if people don't participate it means they are satisfied and will let the 10 percent who are interested take care of things. Maybe voters are interested but not informed.

The Tuesday *Missourian* edition redeemed itself by repeating information on locations, etc. on the front-page (continued on the back page) for those who missed it in the Sunday edition, proving that media can provide MI without losing its value of fairness. But placement, timing, and completeness of details are important in making MI useful to citizens. Since local political parties did not mail any information on caucus participation to local registered voters, the vacuum of information needed to be filled by local media.

## Conclusions

Improving political reporting should move in three directions -- rethinking, retooling, and revitalizing. First, journalists need to rethink about the "what" of political stories that is covered. Ideally, the traditional emphasis on horse-race conflict in political races would be abandoned. This is not easy. Necessary speed determines that day-to-day conflict cannot be omitted and analysis done in its place. Imagine opening a morning newspaper's front page with a major section left blank and this note from the editors: "We apologize for the inconvenience of not reporting what the major candidates said yesterday on poverty in their visits to our city. It will take us several days to analyze the issues and check each party's records -- we hope to bring you that news as soon as possible." Yes, that would be irresponsible. However, the media outlet can publish the day's events and then continue to analyze and print/broadcast that information in a timely and prominent manner. Media also must continue to alert citizens of societal problems that affect the powerless.

If given a chance, politicians will ignore many of the nation's problems because there are no quick fixes. Also, it is unlikely the working poor will form a PAC. Media must continue to address injustices in our society by relating trends to other problems and asking questions such as: Can violence in our schools be tied to racial and economic problems? How much are the S & L crisis and other bailouts causing economic woes? What are the implications of urban and rural poverty for the suburbs?

Second, journalists can retool and use available techniques wisely. By recognizing that citizens have a limited amount of time to spend in becoming politically informed and thus will select those sources of information that don't lead to overloading in making political decisions (Downs, 1957), media need to use a variety of approaches in conveying political information. It is fine if a special section will be devoted to the history of caucuses, but Mobilizing Information must be placed prominently. Labeled analysis stories need to continue to receive prominent positions and not be relegated to the editorial page. Perhaps the editorial page itself must be redesigned and repositioned.

New ways for local television stations to utilize MI for political participation should be explored. Television -- at least cable stations -- has made a start in concrete analysis and coverage in this campaign. However, since many citizens do not have cable, this improved coverage needs to expand to networks. Other retooling techniques include repetition or rehearsal of information. The in-depth articles and broadcasts of the primaries must be repeated closer to the elections for those who wait until the last minute to be informed. Also, media need to investigate more and poll less.

Third, revitalizing of citizens through the media is vital to making them conversational partners. Media can utilize its educational role well, but a good teacher both answers and asks questions. Ask questions of voters and nonvoters as citizens of a democracy, not simply potential deciders of candidates' fates. Ask citizens open-ended questions about what is troubling them about politics, ethical and civil rights issues facing America, economics, and their communities. Finally, if the national problem of racism is to be adequately discussed in the community, the minority makeup of our newsrooms needs to increase.

For journalists, bearing witness is not taking sides; it is taking charge of the political and educational functions of media. Bearing witness for journalists means to continue to alert the world to economic and racial oppression with improved political reporting, thus aiding citizens in becoming conversational partners.

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# The Concrete-Avoidance Model: Media, Public Opinion, And the Gulf War

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# The Concrete-Avoidance Model: Media, Public Opinion, And the Gulf War

Patriotic images in the media glorifying the Gulf War were many. But images or words questioning the war were few. Dependence on government sources often forced the media to show their loyalty and demonstrate that America was involved in a just war. Observers maintain that debate was stifled in media because of government propaganda or a symbiotic relationship between press and government (Lee and Devitt, 1991; Rosen, 1991; and Ruffini, 1991). In those criticisms, information flow is linear -- government to media to people. This essay suggests that the Gulf War information flow also involved citizens' opinions affecting media.

Although it is difficult to separate out the interaction between government control, media messages, and public sentiment in the development of public opinion, understanding citizens' reluctance to examine dissent can aid media in understanding the challenges of reporting war to citizens who have different perspectives on the First Amendment. A late 1990 study shows that although just over 90 percent of the respondents believed the government should not be able to tell people what views they may or may not express, only 65 percent of those respondents believed that the freedom of expression under the Constitution should include newspapers (*Editor & Publisher*, Sept. 22, 1990). Just over 57 percent believed government should have the power of censorship. More than 87 percent felt speaking one's mind and expressing opinions without fear of arrest or interference was very important, but only 58.6 percent said it was very important for the press to have the right to publish whatever information it may uncover. This inability to reconcile democratic beliefs with specific practices was especially prevalent during the Gulf War.

The public appeared to be hostile to media during the Gulf War. Although it has been two hundred years since passage of the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment, journalists might feel that the public rejected the First Amendment in favor of an uninformed public. However, journalists often forget that just as there is no explicit "public right to know" in the Constitution, there is no "the public must listen" duty. In the "textbook" First Amendment model of communication and public opinion under which many of the media operate, the President would have made a decision about involving America in a war after studying all the options carefully, explaining them to the American people, and then carrying out the wishes of the American "public." In this traditional First Amendment model, the media would have given all sides of the war issue.

Obviously, this model did not operate in the Gulf War. Media did not have the influence to create public conversation on the pros and cons of involvement. In fact, the reverse often happened. Public opinion affected media content much more than media affected public opinion. This trend is especially frightening when considering the controversial topics that need continued discussion in the media such as reducing the debt, national health care, and poverty. Ideally, media should not abdicate their political and educational roles when faced with negative or indifferent public opinion.

This essay examines several traditional models of public opinion/decision-making by the American public and suggests a new model with negative implications for media and national discussion of issues -- the concrete-avoidance model. The following questions will be addressed: What are some traditional models of public opinion/decision-making in a democratic society? What is the concrete-avoidance model and how can this model explain Gulf War hostility to the media? Is the concrete-avoidance model of the Gulf War much different from what happened in the Vietnam War? What role did media play in the war? What are the lessons of Gulf War coverage?

## What are some traditional models of public opinion/decision-making in a democratic society?

The term "public opinion," as used in this essay, refers to attitudes and beliefs that people hold about matters of public concern (Levine, 1990). Levine points out that even the word "public" has two meanings. The mass public is made up of ordinary citizens who do not have much information about issues and react in a generalized manner to political stimuli. Attentive public members, about 15 percent of the population, are concerned with public issues on a consistent basis (Levine). In the Gulf War, attitudes and beliefs previously held on basic democratic concepts possibly colored and shaped public opinion -- mass and attentive -- when the crisis arose.

Historically, public opinion was not a requirement for waging war. Ithiel de Sola Pool questions how important public opinion really is in international politics, "Are wars made in the minds of men?" (1964, p. 7). He says that until the 16th century public opinion was not related to foreign policy. Instead, the squabbles of princes initiated wars. This changed with the religious wars following the Reformation when ideological issues gave combatants command of the loyalty of a large share of the population. After the French revolution, ordinary citizens began to take positions on foreign affairs.

In the modern prenuclear world, de Sola Pool maintains rulers' manipulations and maneuverings required supportive public opinion -- warlike feelings and tensions. He suggests that with the development of nuclear warheads, public opinion is not so important. However, his prenuclear concept that war requires supportive public opinion is reflected today in events such as the Panama and Gulf conflicts. Although President Bush did not need public opinion (or even a legislative vote) to declare war, he certainly did need public opinion to sustain the hostility, retain its popularity, and keep alive reelection hopes.

Politicians have made it clear that they "learned" from Vietnam. Politicians not only learned that hostilities can be costly but also that public opinion is necessary to justify the costs of hostility. Assenting public opinion appears to be a necessary part of American foreign conflicts.

Usually public opinion models are based on citizen participation in elections or long-term policy making rather than war, but traditional models are useful for understanding citizens' influence on public policy and how media may have been influenced by public opinion in the Gulf War. Erikson et al. (1980) list five traditional models by which public opinion can be reflected in public policy. The **rational-activist** model assumes citizens expect to be politically informed, involved, rational, and active. In the Gulf War, citizens were perhaps active in expressing opinion once war was declared, but needed background information was missing from media coverage in the early stages of the conflict. For example, during August 1990, media coverage focused on good versus evil themes, forgetting to remind citizens that the United States had supported Iraq in the war against Iran and other relevant historical issues (Malek and Leidig, 1991). In the **political-parties** model, parties state positions and then voters select from platforms. This model was certainly not an option in the Gulf War. The opposition party was not given adequate time to state an opposing position.

In the **pressure-group** model, pressure groups serve as links between people and representatives. This model probably did not operate because leaders often communicated with people directly via television addresses and press conferences. In the **sharing** model, many attitudes are broadly held throughout the public, and elected leaders cannot help but satisfy public opinion to some degree even if the public is totally apathetic. The sharing model did not reflect public opinion in the Gulf War because it requires more time to understand and develop decision-making opinion than was available in the Gulf War. The fifth traditional model -- the **role-playing** model -- is built on the premise that if elected officials believe they should learn constituency opinion and enact it into public policy, public policy may well reflect public opinion. At first, it appears that the role-playing model may be useful for describing behavior in the Gulf War. However, because elected officials believed they should shape constituency opinion rather than learn from it, it also fails as a model.

## What is the concrete-avoidance model, and how can this model explain Gulf War hostility to the media?

Since none of these traditional models is a satisfactory model of the Gulf War, I suggest a new public opinion model -- the **concrete-avoidance** model. In this model, citizens do not question legitimacy and desirability of the government's basic structure, and they support [illegible]ts only in the abstract. If information confuses citizens or attempts to convince them that the government's legitimacy may be questionable, they reject those who communicate the information or bear bad news because they avoid concreteness and prefer vagueness. Discussion is minimal in this model because discussion requires using concrete information. This information often conflicts with the "official" reason for government's actions.

This new model is based on Monroe's (1975) work on political attitudes about democracy. He says that some political attitudes are so basic that they serve as a basis for the political culture of a system. Monroe discusses Americans' basic attitudes toward political authority, individual rights, and race. Attitudes on political authority and rights are important to assess any media influence in the Gulf War.

Monroe says that in general Americans hold initially positive views of government and other social institutions but have inconsistent conclusions. "Americans hold seemingly contradictory attitudes about their political system and its leaders, combining respect -- and even awe -- with criticism and occasional distrust" (p. 164). He states that support for political institutions and ideals is high at the symbolic level while appraisal of particular individuals and their actions tends to draw more negative reactions.

Most American citizens don't question the legitimacy and desirability of the government's basic structure. Attitudes toward ideal practice of individual or civil rights carry the same feelings. According to Monroe, Americans support rights in the abstract. But when it comes to specific civil rights cases, citizens often don't agree with specific applications of the rights. This cleavage between the abstract and the concrete poses psychological conflict within the belief systems of many individuals. "Since most people never write letters to public offices . . . the guarantees of the First Amendment must necessarily remain at the abstract level, products of a learning process completed many years before" (pp. 164-165). He concludes that policies and public affairs are of low salience, but citizens do set limits on permissible activities of the government. However, most do not feel that government oversteps those boundaries.

In the suggested concrete-avoidance model, citizens allow leaders to make decisions that fit in the basic framework of democracy without too much criticism. If those policy decisions do not seemingly fit into that ideal framework, the psychological conflict between abstract and particular is not solved by resolving the ambivalence of the message or being hostile to leaders. Instead, the conflict is solved with hostility to the messenger -- usually the media. This is indeed the so-called "killing the messenger" phenomena. Public discussion of controversial issues that requires concrete thinking shuts down in this model. This model corresponds with Graber's work on how citizens process political information according to schemata (1988). She says schemata reflecting generalized norms of the political culture are labeled "the American way." To the respondents in her study, freedom of expression was an essential element of democracy, but there was little consensus whether this freedom applied to severe criticism of government policies (p. 210).

This narrow view of freedom of expression was evident in the Gulf War. Many

Americans believed that journalists endangered the troops and undermined the war effort (Boot, 1991). Eighty-three percent of 62,000 respondents blasted the media's war coverage in a February 1991 ABC call-in poll -- even paying fifty cents a blast. Boot cites several other examples of the public's distrust of the media during the Gulf War reflected in other call-in shows. However, a more random *Times Mirror* survey shows that eight out of 10 Americans gave the press a positive rating for its war coverage with 57 percent believing the military should impose even tighter restrictions on war coverage (cited in Boot). Boot suggests that the public did not want the media hampering the war because citizens wanted a quick victory. The American public was desperate to believe that the government was telling the truth. These actions support the concrete-avoidance model. Dissent was not tolerated because it was concrete and citizens prefer abstract values.

A democratic political culture requires citizens who are tolerant of those groups and individuals outside their frame of reference (Pierce et al., 1982). But this theoretical need for the value of tolerance is difficult to reconcile with citizens' down-to-earth inability to tolerate other views. It appears that, in reality, Americans often do not want dissenting beliefs or opinions to enter their decision-making framework. Allowing dissent is not a treasured American value. Sobran suggests that the country has not learned to argue (1991). He cites the use of the label "anti-American" for those who wanted to debate the wisdom of involvement in the Gulf War. "If supporting your government's policies is the test of patriotism, then a lot of conservatives are anti-American too, since they spend most of their time bashing the government." Sobran maintains that if we can't argue, we can't think. And thinking may be what this country needs. Fear of argument and the tendency of Americans to label anything that cannot be resolved in their minds with a stereotype are both examples of the negative products of the concrete-avoidance model.

Symbols of citizens' acceptance of general, abstract theories of democracy and avoidance of discord were such frivolities as American flags on World Series players' shirts, "which blended into the uniform as the Sears Tower would blend in the Grand Canyon," and the avalanche of patriotic bumper stickers, window decals, and label pins (Chapman, 1990). Chapman says war and preparation for war are grim enough activities without the added affliction of "gratuitous displays of patriotism whose main purpose is to encourage citizens to put their brains in a safe deposit box and embrace what very folly their government chooses to pursue." He adds, "When flag-waving serves to squelch healthy skepticism, it does no favor to the ideals behind the flag or to the men and women who will pay the supreme price for our government's errors." This desire to squelch skepticism affected media's role in the war.

To understand media's role in the war, one has to understand that media effects on public opinion lie on a continuum (Pierce et al.). The theories range from the dominant agenda-setting model of media having a direct impact to the middle-of-the-road theory of uses-and-gratifications to the obstinate-audience model at the extreme end. In the Gulf War, the obstinate-audience and the uses-and-gratifications models may have the most relevance to the concrete-avoidance model. In the obstinate-audience model, citizens critically evaluate information and reject that which does not coincide with their beliefs and accept that which does. In the uses-and-gratifications theory, interpersonal channels of information function side by side with mass media channels and exert much influence (Rivers et al., 1980).

However, these traditional concepts of how media affect the message and media's impact may be changing because of technological, economic, and audience developments -- all which affect the nature of political information (Pierce et al.). The speed and accuracy of transmitted information allows citizens to know about political events much faster than before. This trend was especially present in the Gulf War as CNN not only kept the world up-to-date but also on-the-spot. Pierce suggests that this speed may lead to superficiality and create stereotypic frameworks that are more difficult to alter upon receipt of new and more complete political information. These stereotypic frameworks were utilized in the Gulf War by national leaders and communicated widely through media. For example, Hussein was called a Hitler. But by the time media began reporting that America had been supporting this "Hitler" for many years, the public did not care. The stereotype was in place and operating -- to the national leaders' advantage. A complicated Middle East scenario had been trivialized.

Economics, which can shorten in-depth public affairs programming, also alters media impact (Pierce et al.). Because commercial sponsors need large audiences, media will turn to entertainment formats, enhancing the superficiality of communicated information. In the Gulf War ratings game, networks competed in making the news entertaining with catchy music, jingoistic headlines, and patriotic graphics. Lee and Devitt report that a CBS executive said that in order to increase advertising sales the network assured sponsors that it would tailor war specials so the lead-ins would work well with commercials. Also, millions of dollars flowed into media advertising revenue coffers from a Kuwaiti public relations campaign (Ruffini).

Audience developments, that is changes or reactions in the audience such as the fear to express minority viewpoints, also can affect public opinion. Noelle-Neumann's theory of the spiral of silence says that most people have a natural fear of isolation, and in their expression of opinion they try to identify and then follow majority opinion or the "consensus" (1984). Researchers have studied this effect on long-range policy changes. However, even though the Gulf War was a relatively short-term policy decision, this effect may have occurred. Dissenters faced isolation and were labeled as unpatriotic by the public.

Another audience-shaping development, potentially operating in the Gulf War, is the paradoxical capacity of polling to determine public opinion. Polling can affect -- as well as mirror -- public opinion according to some critics (Ginsberg, 1986). Once, polling was used mostly to predict who was voting for whom in elections, but now polling is used to "shape" public opinion by political figures, government leaders, and media corporations.

Ginsberg says critics charge that polling can affect both the beliefs of individuals asked to respond to survey questions and the attitudes of those who read a survey's results. "Thus the major impact of polling is the way polls cumulate and translate individuals' private beliefs into collective public opinions" (p. 62). He cites four changes in the character of public opinion from using survey research: 1) polling alters both what is expressed and what is perceived as the opinion of the mass public by transforming public opinion from a voluntary to an externally subsidized matter; 2) polling transforms public opinion from a behavioral to an attitudinal phenomena; 3) polling changes the origin of information about public beliefs by transforming public opinion from a property of groups to an attribute of individuals; and 4) individual's control over their own public expressions of opinions are lost by transforming public opinion from a spontaneous assertion to a constrained response.

Polling often replaces the alternative, more traditional methods of gauging public opinion such as letters to the editor, reading local newspapers, touring districts and talking with voters, and entertaining delegations who speak for blocks of voters. Ginsberg suggests public opinion is now more amenable to governmental control because expressing an opinion in a poll takes less energy and commitment than opinion initiated by citizens. He says, "The data reported by polls are likely to suggest to public officials that they are working in a more permissive climate of opinion than might have been thought on the basis of alternative indicators of the popular mood" (p. 65). During the Gulf War, political leaders used poll results to show that a "majority" of Americans supported their actions. The implications were clear that true, patriotic Americans should conform to that majority.

Media too can affect public opinion. Price (1989) asserts that public opinion is a social and communicative process and that individuals' opinions can be dependent in both form and content on public debate. He suggests that citizens shape their opinions more based on what others think and how those opinions fit in with others' opinions rather than making up their own minds. Hence, "the potential of mass media coverage to influence people's perceptions of public development in the outside world of public affairs would appear most consequential" (p. 198). Factors such as "what the sides are" and "who is winning" are presented by the media to the public, who then shape their public opinion. When that effect is combined with media's love affair with reporting polls, true "independent" public opinion is questionable. Audience and media developments may have discouraged citizens from wanting to think concretely of causes and ramifications of the war. Rather, public sentiment was caught up in patriotic fervor -- fueled by government propaganda but unwittingly aided by media.

## Is the concrete-avoidance model of the Gulf War much different from what happened in the Vietnam War?

Although political officials say that they had learned from Vietnam not to let the media control public opinion, that perceived cause and effect may not have been the reality of public opinion change in the Vietnam era. Monroe maintains that Vietnam taught us the following five lessons about public opinion: 1) distribution of preferences is not static over time, but it changes slowly and not necessarily in response to particular events; 2) the public is mainly concerned with ends rather than means, and almost any realistic policy that might achieve the desired goal can receive popular approval; 3) the prestige of the presidential office should not be minimized; the public is inclined to accept the occupant's choice of means; 4) the public tends to be centrist; even when status quo policies are not popular, the status quo tends to be more acceptable than deviations to any extreme; and 5) reasons behind public preferences usually are a combination of practical considerations and socialized attitudes toward the political system rather than a sophisticated ideology. These lessons on public opinion during the Vietnam War are quite applicable to the Gulf War.

If the Vietnam concepts are applied to the Gulf War, the first problem is one of time. Even if Americans did not agree with the Gulf War tactics, the lead time on the issue of involvement was too short to change viewpoints and give those viewpoints to leaders (see Vietnam Lesson #1 above). Change of public opinion happens slowly. Americans were not warned or given the historical context of the crisis early enough. Thus it is no surprise that the public so readily accepted the "need" for war.

Bennet (1990) charges that the press asked relevant questions about the Gulf War too late. He questions why our involvement was not questioned in the early stages before troop buildup. "You don't have to oppose the American troop deployment in the Middle East to worry about the singular absence of public debate -- in the House and Senate, in the major papers, on TV -- during those first few weeks. You just have to believe that good debate makes good policy," (p. 8). How did we get from a projected ceiling of 50,000 troops to nine times that number? How did we go from "wholly defensive" to ensuring "that the coalition has an adequate offensive military option"? Bennet asserts that some tough stories analyzed the United States' interests in the Persian Gulf, but the means the president would choose to defend those interests were not debated.

Bennet says that of the country's major papers only the *Los Angeles Times* published an editorial in the first six weeks evaluating the size of the deployment. Even that editorial predicted that such a huge buildup wouldn't happen because Congress would refuse, the American people wouldn't support it, the Saudis wouldn't tolerate it, and Bush wouldn't risk a buildup because of his reelection. Late in August, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* published reports that the administration had planned on sending huge numbers of troops from the very beginning. However, neither paper admitted it had been duped at the beginning by the Administration's deception and continued to be duped. As the troop number was increased, according to Bennet, no stories were written by the

*Los Angeles Times* critiquing the buildup or exploring other options.

Then after the November election and while Congress was in recess, Bush announced he was adding another 200,000 troops. Although apparently disillusioned, "these papers never sounded the alarm as the true goals of the deployment became obvious." Meanwhile, stories were told about the troops practicing offensive maneuvers. Bennet faults the media for taking the early poll results at face value. When Americans were being asked if they supported Bush sending troops, the pollsters were not asking specific questions of how many troops should be sent. Finally, Bennet says that there were repeated failures to give serious considerations to the opinions of what he estimates as the silent 40 percent. Thus polling and the speed of decisions eliminated serious examination of involvement.

If we accept that the public thought the desired goals -- free a brutalized nation, keep the world safe for democracy, show America's strength -- were desirable, then citizens would not be concerned with the means or buildup (Vietnam Lesson #2). Even if citizens thought Bush a preppie wimp, they felt the office deserved respect because without respect from other nations, our nation would have appeared weak. Consequently, Americans accepted the president's choice of means (Vietnam Lesson #3), and deviation was considered unpatriotic. Antiwar sentiment was still perceived as radical digression (Vietnam Lesson #4).

The combination of practical considerations and socialized attitudes (Vietnam Lesson #5) may have prompted Americans to question the media and support the president. One practical consideration was the different nature of soldiers from the Vietnam War. Since many Gulf War soldiers were in the reserves, citizens knew neighbors, friends, and family members from all walks of life and all ages who either were serving or who might serve. These people were not just young isolated draftees but men and women with faces and occupations. Thus, this war required more loyalty and patriotism.

Another practical consideration may have been America's need for a war to boost its morale. In a *Progressive* article, "The War Some Wanted," the idea of a hidden agenda is raised. The article asserts that the war was "to reinvigorate the national psyche, breaking the pervasive mood of pessimism and self-doubt" (p. 10). Americans may have been looking for someone to blame because the American economic dream is souring. "Their standard of living is declining, their job security has evaporated, their self-esteem is suffering." The article suggests that war was an ideal scapegoat and escape, and Hussein was a new Willie Horton.

## What role did media play in the war?

These five public opinion lessons from the Vietnam War set the stage for the beliefs and attitudes that Americans held during the Gulf War. Media had three choices -- jump on the bandwagon, sound the trumpet of dissent, or a combination of the two. Katz suggests that newspapers were too eager to jump on the bandwagon, and he questions the practice of waving flags to hawk papers (1991). He cites a giant billboard greeting card sent to American troops (a joint venture of a mall, a communications corporation, and a Massachusetts paper) as an excessive flag-waving practice. The *Philadelphia Daily News* featured "Project Pen Pal" with profiles of area soldiers and their Persian Gulf addresses. Katz suggests that publishing hundreds of letters debating the rationale behind the deployment would provide "a real community service and boost the morale of readers who don't feel their opinions are of much concern to anyone." Also, newspapers needed to cover crises, not act as a postal service. He cautions that these knee-jerk reactions are almost as old as newspapers, dating from the Spanish-American War when publishers were supporting a war to sell papers. "Yet the notions of promotion and public service evidenced in the Gulf crisis seemed . . . more a throwback to World War I than the Gorbachev era. It's time for publishers to rethink this reflexive flag waving, time to be a little less eager to repeat past mistakes" (p. 44). One Delaware newspaper even went so far as to provide the yellow "ribbon" to show support for the troops by distributing its editions in yellow bags to subscribers specifically for that purpose (*Editor & Publisher*, March 9, 1991).

Another critic suggests that the media acted as a drum major for war and deception and a gatekeeper and cheerleader rather than a crusader for truth. In a *USA Today* book review Reynolds (1990) charges that the media did little to help readers learn about the Middle East's culture, religion, or land. Reynolds suggests the media should have questioned such practices as spending billions to protect Kuwait's billionaire emir while 13.5 million children in America live in poverty. "How many of the emir's 50 children go to bed hungry?" Other topics not covered, according to Reynolds, were the black public's opinions about the war, the justification of Israel's invasion of Lebanon, and the condemnation of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Hallin (1991) suggests that the Gulf War brought back the glamour of war that was lost in Vietnam. "Television coverage of the war . . . brought back much of the guts and glory . . . [and] may prove one of the war's greatest costs: that it restored war to a place of pride in American culture" (p. 17). He says that television couldn't speak of the negative side of war culture because it would have shown disrespect to the fighting men and women. Part of the glory symbolism was television's continued use of the flag and ending newscasts with patriotic stories. NBC's logo was a fighter/bomber superimposed on an American flag with the words, "America at War." Hallin suggests that the flag was "also a convenient political protection from charges that the networks were helping the enemy by reporting from Baghdad" (p. 19).

Glorified war technology took on more importance than issues behind the war. A University of Massachusetts survey shows 81 percent of the respondents could identify the Patriot missile (Lee and Devitt, p. 15). Only 13 percent knew the government responded to

Iraq's threat to use force against Kuwait in July by saying it would take no action, and fewer than a third were aware that either Israel or Syria were occupying disputed territories in the Mideast. Only 14 percent knew that the United States was part of a tiny minority in the United Nations voting against pursuing a political settlement to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

Armstrong (1990) asserts that survival of media also was at stake, causing self-censorship based on economics as reporters were hobbled by editors and producers to "win" the competitive daily news war. Thus media managers forgot about historical and cultural contexts, were superficial in exploring economic consequences, and were indolent in examining Bush Administration predictions about how the conflict would unfold. From the economic standpoint, Armstrong says the media never examined the complete economic story behind the Gulf in such areas as Saudi Arabia's cheating by exceeding the agreed-upon quotas of oil and Saudi Arabia's sudden wealth. A *Nation* article also supports the idea of self-censorship. "The fact is that the post-Reagan American media do such a good job of censoring themselves and managing the news according to Washington's political line *du jour* that no draconian guidelines may be needed to keep reporters in check" (Jan. 28, 1991).

Media also did not examine what Bush meant by "time is on our side." Armstrong suggests that the statement meant it was time to finish the construction of a massive military infrastructure in the Persian Gulf and time to test its forces and weapons in the field. He suggests that reporters did not focus on the long-term relationship of the United States with Saudi Arabia. He details the relationship going back ten years with the sale of five AWACS and suggests that the increasing military buildup in Saudi Arabia only lacked an American presence. Regardless of whether one agrees with Armstrong's assessment of the situation, he makes the point well that Americans were not getting the whole story during the Gulf War or time period leading up to the war.

But this self-censorship may have been caused by the chilling effect of government policies rather than economic pressures. Perhaps both local and larger newspapers were afraid of making waves and being left out of the press pool, a possibility Nathan (1991) suggests. The "hometowner coverage plan" was devised by the Pentagon. The plan guaranteed that smaller papers, such as the *El Paso Times*, were in the pool. The *Times* is a Gannett newspaper in a city where a sixth of the population is in the military or makes its living from the military. Pentagon-approved newspapers got transit papers without much of the usual red tape. Some believe the reporters were so grateful that they reported only positive news, a Pentagon goal. If so, the positive news only fueled supporting public opinion and made the media partners in squelching debate.

Anecdotal evidence suggests the "public" may have frightened news managers. A reporter alleges he was fired by a small-town California paper after a local businessman complained to the publisher about the reporter's story (never published) on the sales of patriotic materials relating to the Gulf War. The reporter said, "This is small-town America, a bastion of conservatism. I don't think Paso Robles was ready for this story." In Pennsylvania, a reporter and an editor were fired after editorials denounced the Gulf War and Bush (Stein, 1991; Case, 1991). Other journalists who were fired included a *San Francisco Examiner* columnist (Balderston, 1991), an NBC stringer, two talk show hosts, and a Texas editor (*Index on Censorship*, 1991).

Would an honest debate have been tolerated? Alperovitz (1991) suggests that it was difficult for an honest debate because the media were easily focused by the White House and national-security elites. Although he condemns the country's leaders, he suggests that "we cannot ignore our own reluctance to act, our slowness, our complicity." That complicity is often media's dependence on reporting issues -- even in the Gulf War -- only in the objective language of horse-race coverage as is done in political campaigns (Hallin). If the concrete-avoidance model is at fault, media needs to find ways to overcome the public's aversion to concrete information without making media the villains.

### What are the lessons of Gulf War coverage?

Is it possible to change the public's behavior from the concrete-avoidance model? Can Americans learn to argue again, or are they too manipulated by both press conventions and government propaganda funneled through the media to seek out diverse opinions? If public opinion continues to shape coverage, the future of media institutions being able to fulfill their political and educational functions is bleak. America is not becoming less controversial nor more isolationist, and its citizens will need a vibrant, noncompliant press.

America's interference and maintenance of its own interests globally may mean future small wars, comparable to the Gulf War. Media soon may find themselves in a similar position on the negative end of the concrete-avoidance model, and they need to prepare ways to counteract government interference with reporting both abroad and at home. Media also need to consider cooperation rather than competition in times such as administration-declared "wars." It may not be possible considering the power structures of boards of major media companies and the dependence on official sources for most news. But if media outlets would agree not to cover government provided sound bites, propaganda, and photo-ops, perhaps the power relationship between press and government power structures would change.

Much of the future coverage will focus on television and its role in accelerated diplomacy and usurping traditional governmental sources of information as was practiced by CNN. Live television coverage needs to be improved. For example, stations will have to explain what "censored" means and place more live coverage in context rather than just broadcasting it. One critic calls much of CNN's coverage "raw material for journalism, rather than journalism itself" (*Insight*, Feb. 18, 1991). Less "pointing of camera" and more news judgment will have to be developed with expanded television coverage. Other critics charge that ultra-fast television coverage becomes a propaganda tool when "impatient television gobbles up all time for consideration, all time for checking and weighing information -- time that a democracy urgently requires" (Kleine-Brockhoff et al., 1991, p. 26). Kleine-Brockhoff et al. assert that because high-speed journalism depends too much on military information, speed and news triumph over democracy.

Quantity of news also didn't equate with quality. Rosen suggests that despite all the "extensive" coverage, the public still didn't know what really happened in Iraq, and Americans remained remote from their own actions by not discussing the war from an ethical viewpoint. He adds that in addition to the remoteness, experts shared a common way of understanding war as a technical problem rather than a moral problem. Media did not explain that "war is also an exercise in moral reasoning. . . .A democracy also needs to understand a war as a kind of moral hazard" (p. 63).

Media may need to change the focus of its criticism of the government. Media should have focused more on discussion of issues and less on complaining -- which may have been interpreted by the public as whining -- excessively about not being included in press pools or censorship from the Gulf. Although these are extremely important First Amendment issues and cannot be abandoned, they were issues perceived by the American people as selfish concerns. If journalists accept the concrete-avoidance model, they can understand that in the presence of an emotional topic, citizens are not going to be concerned about the concrete idea of press pools. But citizens could have been served more by publishing and broadcasting more dissent, background, and "total picture" coverage of the Mideast earlier.

Finally, media outlets need to plan for future wars and begin to adopt a philosophy about coverage rather than wait for knee-jerk reactions to new conflicts. Although no conflict or war is identical, having a philosophy of improved coverage and determining methods to counterattack the concrete-avoidance model may elevate dissent to a treasured

American value in addition to protecting freedoms. Malek and Leidig suggest that the state of democracy will suffer unless the press regains its voice:

> If the press fails in its role to gather and present information that inspires debate, and instead chooses to indoctrinate the public with the official position, passing it off as the accepted consensus, the question rises as to the difference between our press and those belonging to systems which do not claim to be democratic. (p. 19)

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# VOTERS' REASONING PROCESSES AND MEDIA INFLUENCES DURING THE PERSIAN GULF WAR

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# VOTERS' REASONING PROCESSES AND MEDIA INFLUENCES DURING THE PERSIAN GULF WAR

## ABSTRACT

Voters engage in complex reasoning processes in deriving their policy preferences. To demonstrate the processes and media influences on the processes, this study analyzes the panel data gathered from a national probability sample before and after the Persian Gulf war. The results show a process of forming one's approval of Bush handling of the Gulf crisis that involved feelings toward Bush, patriotic feelings, and acceptance of the official statements of U.S. foreign policy goals. These positive contributors are all related to higher levels of exposure to television news exposure. Respondents' level of public affairs information and exposure to newspaper public affairs functioned as a contingent factor in the reasoning processes: Those at the upper half of the scale showed a greater emphasis on ideology and negative emotional reactions to the destruction of the war in forming their post-war Bush approval ratings than those at the lower half.

# VOTERS' REASONING PROCESSES AND MEDIA INFLUENCES DURING THE PERSIAN GULF WAR

The Persian Gulf war was, and still is, regarded by many as the only indisputably "just war" since World War II. As if confirming this point of view, American public opinion poll data showed enormous popular support for President George Bush's conduct of the war effort. According to the Gallup poll, by late February 1991, 80% of the respondents interviewed claimed that the situation in the Mideast was worth going to war over. At the same time, Bush's popularity soared: the percentage of people "approving" Bush's performance as President registered at 87%, a 27% increase from the immediate pre-war measure in early August 1990.

While the news media and public opinion polls amassed indications of the glory of "winning" the war and the popularity of President Bush, critics were castigating the media for functioning as propaganda tools for the Administration (*e.g.*, Chomsky, 1991; Jhally, Lewis, & Morgan, 1991; Gerbner, in press). Whatever the merits of such commentaries in terms of media performance, however, the issue of audience effects requires more careful consideration. Popular commentaries of media effects regarding the war seem to rest upon scattered or even suspect empirical evidence or popular beliefs of powerful, direct media effects on how members of the public would perceive the conflict and how they would experience the conflict in both cognitive and affective domains.

Against this background, this study is designed to examine one research question: How did members of the American public reason about the Gulf conflict and form their decisions whether to support their Commander-in-Chief's handling of the Gulf crisis? To answer this question, this study draws upon data from the National Election Study's 1990-91 Panel/Pilot study. It examines voters' approval ratings of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis before and after the war and the contributions to the before-after changes in the approval ratings by a set of cognitive and affective factors.

## How Do Voters Reason?

In searching for an answer to our research question, we started with two frustrating puzzles in the political psychology literature. One is the observation that while American voters often appear ignorant of political processes and public policies by any standard, yet, when asked, they are generally able and sometimes even eager to offer their opinions about political candidates and policy issues (Neuman, 1986). The second puzzle begins with the observation that American voters talk about principles and are able to reliably locate themselves and political candidates on an ideological scale of liberalism *vs.* conservatism. Yet, they often do not express the opinions that show much consistency with their overarching ideological principles or sufficient temporal stability to warrant consideration as crystallized attitudes (Converse, 1964; but see Nie & Andersen, 1974; Krosnick, 1991).

These conflicting observations become puzzles largely because the available explanations do not depict satisfactorily how voters think about public policy issues. In their recent treatise, Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock (1991) take voters' reasoning **processes** as their central focus and offer fresh explanations of the lack of consistency, stability, and knowledge basis of voters' belief systems and attitude structure. Sniderman *et al.*'s formulation of voters' reasoning processes has three important features: population heterogeneity in policy reasoning conditioned on political sophistication, utilization of various "cognitive heuristics," and a reasoning chain linking abstract principles and concrete opinions concerning specific issues.

The "heterogeneity" thesis states that people make up their minds by taking into consideration different factors and/or placing different weights on the same factors. One crucial contingent factor is political sophistication, an abstract "bundle" concept (Sniderman *et al.*, 1991: 21) indicating the levels of cognitive resources that individuals can mobilize in their political reasoning. In their study, the Sniderman team employs years of formal schooling as a surrogate measure of political sophistication. They show that, across a variety of issues, those with higher levels of education take a more cognitive approach in their reasoning, as evidenced by greater strengths in the relationships between ideological orientation, principles, and concrete policy preferences. In contrast, those with lower levels of education tend to take an affective approach in deriving their opinions. For example, they are more likely to rely on affect toward a social group in forming their opinions concerning racial equality.

The "heuristic" thesis is based on the view that voters are cognitive economizers in processing political information. They take cognitive shortcuts in processing information and in forming their policy preferences and opinions. In the cognitive literature, heuristics refer to simple "rules of thumb" which function as surrogates for the immediate logical premises from which one derives preference and judgmental inferences (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974).[1] One heuristic discussed in Sniderman *et al.*'s work is pertinent to this study: the "likability heuristic." This notion refers to one's affect toward a social group or differences in one's levels of affect toward two opposing candidates being a basis for a person's judgments of policies related to the social group or preferences of a candidate. The Sniderman team shows that politically less sophisticated people are able to derive their policy preferences through utilization of this heuristic.

The "reasoning chain" thesis assumes that voters' reasoning process parallels the logical procedure of moving from abstract and general to concrete and specific. Starting from this simple idea, it is then possible to formulate a causal model of various factors that enter voters'

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cognitive calculus that lead to their policy preferences or candidate evaluations.

Applying these ideas to the Gulf War issue, we can derive three hypotheses:

$H_1$ Voters with conservative ideological orientations were more supportive of the Bush Administration's policies.

$H_2$ Voters who expressed more positive feelings toward Bush were more supportive of the Administration's policies.

$H_3$ Levels of political sophistication function as a contingent variable in that those with higher levels of political sophistication tended to reveal a stronger relationship between ideological orientation and support for the Bush Administration's Gulf policies and those with lower levels of political sophistication were more likely to use affect toward Bush as a "likability heuristic" by showing a stronger relationship between affect toward Bush and support for his Gulf policies.

Two additional factors need to be considered when applying Sniderman *et al.*'s theoretical framework to study voters' reasoning processes concerning the Gulf War. First, the issue culture at a particular historical moment may play a very important role in how voters reason about the issue (Gamson, 1988; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). More specifically, the relative importance of ideological principles and the "likability heuristic" in voters' reasoning process depends on the degrees of relevance of such principles, which in turn depends on how the issue is presented and defined (Lau, Smith & Fiske, 1991) and the plurality of political discourse concerning the issue (Brody, 1991). Historically, a major international conflict involving U.S. troops, pride, and prestige is often a cue for unity and a reason for significant increases in popular support for the Commander-in-Chief (Hugick & Gallup, 1991; but see Brody, 1991). In forming opinions concerning the Administration's policies related to such conflicts, voters may rely more heavily on principles (*e.g.*, patriotism, supporting the president) that cut across the ideological spectrum.

The Gulf crisis was a classic example of such a potential "rally event" -- U.S. troops, prestige, pride, credibility, and patriotism were all on the line. But, it was able to achieve its tremendous "rallying" influence in part because of the monolithic nature of the political discourse concerning the issue, characterized by a hegemonic definition of the nature and causes of the Gulf conflict and of the options available to the United States. The Bush Administration successfully used the media to portray the conflict as the peace-loving people of the world rising up against an aggressive, evil dictator threatening democracy. This hegemonic characteristic of the issue culture was clearly revealed by the reported fear among the politicians in Washington that opposing the war would be a political liability in the 1992 elections. The point is further illustrated by the aggregate public opinion trends between early August 1990 and July 1991 shown in Figure 1. The figure shows the proportions of respondents interviewed by the Gallup organization in the 17 separate cross-sectional national polls who gave affirmative answers. As we can see from the figure, the pattern of temporal fluctuations in proportions of people approving Bush's handling his job as President is almost identical to that of approving his handling of the Gulf crisis and to that of believing the situation in the Gulf was worth going to war over.

In this type of issue culture, voters' ideological orientations may play a less decisive role in the formation of voters' policy preferences concerning the issue, especially in their support for their Commander-in-Chief, compared to the issues examined in Sniderman *et al.*'s study (*e.g.*, racial equality and the civil rights of homosexuals). Furthermore, affect, measured as either positive feelings toward Bush or more general patriotic feelings, should have stronger and more uniform effects on voters' support for their president.

The second but related factor that we need to consider involves media influences that are external to voters' cognition. Through their analysis of public opinion poll data as well as news content data involving a large number of public policy issues, Page, Shapiro and Dempsey (1987) show that popular presidents had a significant impact on the shape and direction of public opinion, so did news commentators and experts sought after by the news media. The point was reinforced by Brody (1991) in his analysis of the historical data of presidential job performance ratings. Further, it has been shown by at least one study that as far as foreign policy issues are concerned, voters are especially willing to grant the president the authority to define the issues and to comply with the position advocated by the president (Hurwitz, 1989). The evidence seemed to justify many media critics's worries: During the Gulf crisis, the news media were managed by the Administration and the military; they failed to present dissenting voices; they carried the policy discourse concerning the war within a very narrow spectrum; they glorified and fictionalized the war through their presentations of the video-game images of "smart bombs" hitting targets with pinpoint accuracy; and they operated as the Administration's cheerleader. The main thrust of these arguments is that when the mass media failed in their information function by focusing primarily on patriotic emotions, human dramas, spectacular images, and the President's rhetoric, they had deprived the public of its ability to engage in policy reasoning utilizing sufficient cognitive resources (*e.g.*, Jhally, Lewis, & Morgan, 1991).

If these arguments have empirical merit, we should expect positive effects of exposure to TV news on voters' support of the President's Gulf policies and on their positive affect toward the Commander-in-Chief. Further, we also should expect positive effects of increased exposure to news media in general on accepting the Administration's rationale for its Gulf policies: to deter aggression and to protect democracy from the threat of a dictator.

Built upon Sniderman *et al*'s research, this study examines voters' reasoning processes during the Persian Gulf conflict. The complete model examined is shown in Figure 2.[2] The model has a distinct feature of explicitly depicting a reasoning chain (Sniderman *et al.*, 1991): the factors are arranged from left to right based on both levels of abstraction and time of measurement. Ideological conservatism and the pre-war measure of positive affect toward Bush are placed on the far left. They are hypothesized to be caused directly only by the demographic variables, which are exogenous to this reasoning process. Both of these factors are hypothesized to affect the approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis as they are specified in $H_1$ and $H_2$.

To the right of these factors, we locate two sets of post-war measures of cognitive and affective factors. The model stipulates direct causal paths from ideological conservatism, positive affect toward Bush, and pre-war approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis to these factors. These paths can be seen as indications of the filtering or selective perception mechanism (Iyengar, 1990), which functions not only in "limiting what one takes in" but also in restricting what is retrieved from one's memory.[3] This model also postulates that voters formed their opinions concerning Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis by weighing different foreign policy goals and considering their affective reactions related to the war. These variables are thus placed as immediate causes leading to changes in approving Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis before and after the war. The time of measurement strengthens the causal order specified in the reasoning chain notion. Mass media exposure variables are placed as external influences which have direct effects on affect toward Bush, pre- and post-war approvals of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis, and the foreign policy goals and affective reactions.

Based upon the theoretical rationale outlined earlier, this model projects the following additional hypotheses:

$H_4$ The intensified homogeneous portrayal of the Gulf crisis had a powerful impact on voters' reasoning about the issue in some specific ways.

$H_{4a}$ There were positive effects of the political goals of U.S. foreign policy and patriotic feelings on an increased approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis after the war.

$H_{4b}$ Exposure to TV news had positive effects on positive affect toward Bush as well as heightened patriotic feelings, while exposure to newspaper public affairs and TV news both had positive effects on increased emphasis on the political goals of U.S. foreign policy.

$H_{4c}$ Because of the euphoria and fictionalization of TV coverage of the war, exposure to TV news would lead to less intensive negative emotional reactions to the destruction of the war.

$H_5$ There were positive direct effects of exposure to TV news and newspaper public affairs on increased approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis.

The model also was estimated by allowing differential strengths of the cognitive and affective oriented paths contingent upon levels of political sophistication. Considering the unique issue culture of the Persian Gulf conflict, $H_3$ is re-formulated as an issue-specific alternative:

$H_6$ The roles played by both ideological orientation and the "likability heuristic" in voters' reasoning process during the Gulf conflict are unique in that ideological orientation was not strongly related to increased approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis and there was no difference in the effects of positive affect toward Bush and patriotic feelings on increased approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis between high and low political sophistication groups.

## Methods

### *Data*

This study reports the analysis of panel data gathered by the National Election Studies as part of the 1990 election study and the 1991 pilot study. In the NES 1990 study, 2,000 randomly selected respondents across the nation were interviewed between November 7, 1990, and January 26, 1991, with 97% of the interviews completed before January 5th. Questions directly related to the Persian Gulf conflict were asked. These respondents were contacted again between June 4, and July 31, 1991. Among them, 1,385, or more than 69%, completed the second interviews. For more details about the sample design and characteristics, see Miller and National Election Studies (1991a, 1991b).

The time period covered by the panel ensures that we have a before-and-after design with the Gulf War as the major intervention between the two waves of measurement. As we can see from the Gallup Poll data shown in Figure 1, a major shift in public opinion trends occurred immediately after the coalition forces initiated the military offensive. By early April 1991, public support for the war and approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf situation, although eroded somewhat, remained at a very high level. Additional Gallup Poll data show that public approval of Bush's handling of the situation in the Gulf region remained at the 80% level by mid-July (Gallup & Newport, 1991).

*Measures*

The key dependent variable is approval of Bush's handling of the crisis in the Persian Gulf, which was measured in both waves with identical wording on a four-point scale (1="strongly disapprove" and 4="strongly approve").[4]

Two sets of variables used came only from the second wave survey. The first set consists of two affective scales. The scale of emotional reactions to the war was based on factor analysis of six affective items measuring how people felt during the war:[5] upset during the war, sympathetic to the Iraqi people, worried that the fighting might spread, angry at Suddam Hussein, disgusted at killing, and afraid for the American troops. All these items were measured on a three-point scale (1="not feeling it" and 3="feeling it strongly"). They measured emotional reactions among individuals who realized the reality of the war, which, according to some media critics, was not shown in television news coverage of the war. Factor analysis yielded a single factor that accounted for nearly 36% of the total variance. Factor scores were multiplied by ten and the resulting scores were used in all subsequent analysis.

Another affective scale is patriotism, measured by two questions. One (V2417) asked the respondents to indicate on a four-point scale (1="not very good" and 4="extremely good") how they felt when they saw the American flag flying. The other question (V2418) asked respondents to indicate on a similar four- point scale (1="not very strong" and 4="extremely strong") how strongly they loved this country. The two items were highly correlated ($r=.58$, $p < .001$). They were thus averaged into a single patriotism index.

The second set of factors were based on questions asking the respondents to evaluate on a three-point scale (1="not important at all" and 3="very important") the importance of five specific objectives as goals of U.S. foreign policy.[6] These objectives included securing adequate energy supplies, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, reducing environmental pollution around the world, protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression, and helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations. Factor analysis of these items revealed two correlated factors ($r=.19$, $p < .01$) accounting for more than 55% of the total variance. Goals related to energy, nuclear proliferation, and environment loaded on the first factor, which we called "functional goals." The second factor contained the goals of protecting weaker nations and helping to bring democracy, which we labeled "political goals." The factor scores were multiplied by ten and the resulting scores were used in all subsequent analysis.

The other variables used in this study came exclusively from the first-wave survey. Feeling toward George Bush was measured on a 100-point feeling thermometer scale (V134). This scale was transformed into a ten-point scale in the data analysis.

The seven-point ideological orientation scale was built using two measures in the first wave (V406, V407), with one being "extremely liberal" and seven being "extremely conservative."

Many survey questions were pulled together to create the public affairs media use measures. Because the first-wave survey focused on the 1990 election, a large portion of the limited media use questions dealt with exposure or attention to campaign stories or programs. However, a strong argument can be made that most people do not change their stable media use habits, other than at times of life transition or heightened social conflict (Chaffee & Choe, 1981; Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). If so, these measures were reasonable approximations of normal news media exposure. If anything, they under-estimated the amount of media exposure during the Gulf War (Pan *et al.*, 1991).

In addition, some arguments have been made that if it is conceived as a part of the processes of information reception and retention, exposure to media public affairs content will be more conceptually meaningful in any model concerning cognitive effects of media use (Zaller and Price, 1990). For our purposes, media variables must indicate not simply the overt behavior of watching TV news or reading a newspaper, but also the quality of such behavior in terms of its correspondence to increased information about public affairs.

Based on such arguments, we selected seven measures to create the media use indices. Five of them are direct measures of media exposure or attention,[7] including attention to newspaper articles about the 1990 campaign (0="none" and 4="a great deal"), number of campaign programs on TV watched (0="none" and 3="a good many"), attention to TV news about the campaign (0="none" and 4="a great deal"), days per week reading a newspaper and days per week watching TV news. The sixth measure is based on the question (V321) asking the respondents to indicate on a four- point scale (1="hardly at all" and 4="most of the time") how closely they followed "what's going on in government and public affairs." The seventh measure is the sum of the correct answers to the eight questions testing the respondents' knowledge of the political offices held by six news personalities and which party had the majority in the House and the Senate prior to the 1990 election.[8]

The seven variables were submitted to a factor analysis, which yielded two correlated factors (r=.37, p < .001). The two factors accounted for more than 61% of the total variance. The first factor consisted of the two newspaper variables, following public affairs, and political knowledge. It was called the "newspaper public affairs information" factor. The second factor consisted of the three remaining television variables and was thus called the "TV news exposure" factor.

Clearly, the first factor represents information-related media (primarily newspaper) use as well as levels of information about current affairs. In our judgment, it is a better proxy of levels of cognitive resources than education in considering how individuals take different routes in their policy preference reasoning (see Sniderman *et al.*, 1991). Therefore, this factor was used in classifying individuals into high and low political sophistication groups. The second factor, although it measures TV news exposure and attention directly, may be differentiated from the first one both conceptually and empirically: Those who use a newspaper for public affairs information may have some different characteristics than those who mainly use television for the same purposes. More importantly, because of its visual dimension, exposure to television news may be related to quite different cognitive and affective experiences (see Meyrowitz, 1990; Schudson, 1990) and many have expected more powerful effects of television news coverage of the Gulf War.

Six demographic variables were used in the analysis: age; gender (1=male, 2=female); education, as measured by years of formal schooling; occupation, measured by Duncan's socioeconomic index (Stevens & Cho, 1985); family income (1=none or less than $2,999, 23=$90,000 or more); and race (1=black, 0=other).[9]

*Analysis*

All the analyses were based on the 1,344 respondents who expressed their opinions about

U.S. sending military forces to the Gulf. The resulting sample is about 97% of those who completed interviews in both waves.

The analysis proceeded in a step-by-step fashion using LISREL as the primary model-fitting tool. The initial step involves fitting a simple model in which the temporal variation in approving Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis before and after the war was a function of respondent's feelings toward Bush and ideological orientation. Then, the factors of foreign policy goals and affective responses to the war were introduced as important mediating factors as depicted in Figure 2. Both steps were then repeated within each of the two sub-samples divided on the basis of public affairs information levels.

Each model was evaluated on a set of conventional criteria. Fitting both simplified and complete models was not for the purpose of choosing alternative models. Instead, the purpose here was to examine (1) the empirical values -- as indicated by the increased predictive power -- of adding the foreign policy goal and affective response variables to the model and (2) how these additional variables mediating the effects of ideological orientation and positive affect toward Bush. In each model fitted, the six demographic variables were included as the exogenous variables that had direct causal paths to all the factors in the model except the post-war measure of approving Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis.[10]

## Results

### *Direct Effects on Bush Approval*

The NES data showed a significant increase in the overall level of approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis before and after the war: The average approval rating rose from 2.74 to 3.40 on a four-point scale ($t = 20.90$, $p < .001$). The presence of significant changes makes it empirically meaningful to examine the effects of the explanatory variables on changes in approval ratings of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis. The parameters of direct effects on changes in the approval ratings obtained from both models are shown in Table 1.

Assessed by conventional criteria, both models fit the data reasonably well. The ratio of $\chi^2$ to its degree of freedom is 3.03 for Model I and 3.11 for Model II, each corresponds to a goodness-of-fit index of .997 and .998 respectively. Measured by the proportion of variance accounted for, in Model I, the four endogenous predictors added 5% of the variance in the post-war measure of Bush approval in addition to the contributions of the six demographic variables and the stability factor.[11] Adding the two foreign policy goal variables and the two affective response variables in Model II increased the proportion of variance accounted for by another 5%. The evidence indicates the significant empirical values of these variables in predicting the systematic changes in approval Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis over this time period.

Ideological conservatism clearly played a positive role in increased approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis, as did positive affect toward Bush. Both remained significant even after including the four mediating factors between them and the post-war approval measure in Model II. This is clear evidence in support of $H_1$ and $H_2$, which stated that ideological conservatism and positive affect toward Bush had significant positive effects on approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis.

Model II also revealed that both emphasis on the political goals of U.S. foreign policy such as protecting weaker nations against aggression and bringing a democratic form of government to other nations and patriotic feelings had significant positive effects on increased approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis after the war. The evidence is consistent with $H_{4a}$, which says that such positive relationships would be expected because the political interventionist foreign policy goals and patriotic feelings were two dominant themes in the official as well as media discourse concerning the Gulf crisis.

The two media public affairs use variables appeared to play a negative role: increased exposure to newspaper public affairs information as well as to TV news both led to decreases in Bush's approval after the war. The evidence is directly opposite to $H_5$, which predicts direct positive effects of both media variables. We will defer our discussion of this result until a later point.

The same models were fitted to the sub-samples created by dividing the sample into two groups characterized by high and low public affairs information. Table 2 displays the direct effect parameters in both models obtained from each sub-sample.

A comparison of the results from Model I between the high and low public affairs information groups shows that ideological conservatism appeared to have a stronger effect on increase in approving Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis among those with higher levels of public affairs information. But the small insignificant difference in ideological effects between the two sub-samples disappeared immediately after the four additional variables were included, shown by the parameter estimates from Model II. Therefore, there is no clear evidence of a greater reliance on ideological principles in forming one's approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis among those with higher levels of public affairs information, as it is predicted in $H_6$.

The differences between high and low public affairs information groups in the effects of positive affect toward Bush on the post-war approval Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis were in the opposite direction predicted by the "likability heuristic" hypothesis ($H_3$). The evidence suggests that there was a greater consistence between feelings toward Bush and approval of his handling of the Gulf crisis among those with higher levels of public affairs information. The significant difference ($\Delta = .099, p < 01$) found in Model I remained significant in Model II after additional significant predictors were included ($\Delta = .083, p < .01$). Facing this evidence, we also have to reject the part of $H_6$ which stated a homogeneous effect of affect toward Bush on approving Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis between the two groups.

Looking at the parameter estimates associated with the foreign policy goals and affective responses in Model II, we first notice that consistent across the two sub-samples, the importance of the political goals of U.S. foreign policy -- protecting weaker nations against aggression and bringing a demographic form of government to other nations -- corresponded to increases in approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis. Further, in both groups, patriotic feelings played a positive role in increased approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis. There was no difference between the two groups in terms of the effects of emphasis of political goals of U.S. foreign policies. There appeared to have an indication that patriotic feelings had stronger effects among those with lower levels of public affairs information, consistent with Sniderman *et al.*'s suggestion of greater emphasis on affect among those with lower levels of political sophistication in their policy reasoning. But, the difference in the parameter estimates from the two groups did not reach statistical significance ($\Delta = .11$, n.s.).

The evidence may be viewed as testimony of the possible success of the Bush Administration in defining the issue and structuring public responses to its policy initiatives in the Gulf. There is clear evidence in support of $H_{4a}$, *i.e.*, emphasis on political goals of U.S. foreign policy and heightened patriotic feelings both led to increased approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis. Such effects were not contingent upon levels of public affairs information.

The results also show a negative effect of a different kind of affect on increased support of the Commander-in-Chief. Among those with higher levels of public affairs information, the significant increase in approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis resulting from the bolstering of patriotism was significantly hampered by negative emotional reactions to the reality of the war. Among those with lower levels of public affairs information, no similar effect is present ($\Delta$ = .017, $p < .01$).

Table 2 also shows that exposure to newspaper public affairs information led to decreased approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis. The relationship was significant at least in the upper half of the scale, *i.e.*, among those with higher levels of public affairs information. After taking into consideration the effects of the importance of foreign policy goals and affective responses, even the effect of TV news viewing became significantly negative in this group. The evidence indicates that exposure to newspaper public affairs, when combined with following public affairs and information retention, would not lead **directly** to more enthusiastic approval of the President's handling of the Gulf crisis. On the contrary, the **direct** effects may be in the direction of hindering people from joining the hoopla of applauding Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis after the war. But this was only observable among those with higher levels of public affairs information or political sophistication.

### *Additional Media Effects*

The model shown in Figure 2 also hypothesizes media effects on other factors in the reasoning process. This part of the results was shown in Table 3.

The combination of exposure to newspaper public affairs and public affairs information holding was found to have only one significant effect: it corresponded to a greater emphasis on the "functional goals" of U.S. foreign policy. That is, ensuring energy supplies, reducing environmental pollution, and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. This effect was concentrated primarily within the lower half of the distribution, as evidenced by the significant parameter estimate from the low public affairs information group.

The effects of exposure to TV news were very impressive. In the whole sample model, higher levels of TV news exposure had significant effects on all five factors: greater emphasis on both the "functional" and "political" goals of U.S. foreign policy, heightened patriotic feelings, more intense emotional reactions to the reality of the war, as well as greater positive feelings toward Bush. Such a powerful television effects are not surprising, given that to most members of the American public, the Gulf War was the first war that was fought on television in real time (Gerbner, in press).

In the sub-group analysis, such powerful effects of TV news exposure remained and/or became stronger among those with lower levels of public affairs information. There was an indication that among those with higher levels of public affairs information, increased exposure to television news led to less emphasis on the "functional goals" of U.S. foreign policies ($\Delta = .394$, n.s.), although the difference did not reach conventional significance level. Television news also had **differential** impacts on people's patriotic feelings. Among those with lower levels of public affairs information, increased exposure to television news corresponded to a significantly more intense patriotic feeling than among those with higher levels of public affairs information ($\Delta = .081$, $p < .05$). But exposure to television news had equal amount of effects on the reported importance of political goals of U.S. foreign policy.

The results provided powerful support to the part of $H_{4b}$ concerning the effect of exposure to TV news: it heightened patriotic feelings, increased positive feelings toward Bush, and raised the level of salience of protecting weaker nations against aggression and bringing a democratic form of government to other nations as goals of U.S. foreign policy. But the results failed to support the part of $H_{4b}$ predicting a positive relationship between exposure to newspaper public affairs and greater emphasis on the "political goals" of the U.S. foreign policy. Exposure to these two media clearly shows different effects. The evidence also is inconsistent with $H_{4c}$, which stated that increased exposure to television news helped reduce the intensity of their negative emotional reactions to the war. On the contrary, exposure to television news could help elevate negative emotional reactions to the war.

### *Other Mechanisms in the Reasoning Chain*

Table 4 presents the parameter estimates related to two important components of the complete reasoning chain model: the consistency between ideological orientation and affect (both affect toward the President and affective responses toward the symbols and reality of the war) and the filtering process of voters' ideological orientation, affect, and prior attitudes in their reasoning process. Again, we allowed for the possibility of divergence between the two groups with higher or lower levels of public affairs information through sub-sample analysis.

The first part of Table 4 shows the results based on the whole sample estimates. Other than the significant positive correlation between voters' ideological orientation and their affect toward Bush, evidence for consistency in attitude structure is rather weak, indicated by the significant but small positive correlation between ideological conservatism and patriotic feelings and the lack of significant relationships between ideology and two of the other three factors, which, we have shown in the previous tables, played important roles in determining the increases in voters' approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis.

The results show that one's pre-war feeling toward Bush led to more ready acceptance of the Administration's rationale for the war: protecting weaker nations against aggression and bringing democracy to other nations as goals of U.S. foreign policy. It also led to heightened patriotic feelings after the war. Pre-war approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis played a similar role in emphasizing the political goals of the U.S. foreign policy. But it did not elevate patriotic feelings. It did, however, lead to less intensive negative emotional reactions to the war. The evidence suggests that prior attitudes and/or affect might have played some important roles in voters' reasoning process: (1) anchoring voters' cognitive perceptions of and affective responses to the Gulf crisis and (2) operating as an easily accessible "frame" or "schema" that helped structure voters' experiences of the war mediated through television.

The sub-group analysis shows that there is also clear, albeit limited, divergence between those who had high or low levels of public affairs information in this part of their reasoning process. There were indications in the second half of Table 4 that the voters with higher levels of public affairs showed greater overall consistency in their reasoning process: ideological conservatism corresponded to less emphasis on the "liberal issues" such as environment and energy supply as goals of U.S. foreign policy ($\Delta = .509$, n.s.), and stronger affection toward George Bush ($\Delta = .181$, $p < .10$). Among those with higher levels of public affairs information, ideological conservatism also corresponded to lower levels of negative reactions to the destruction of the war ($\Delta = -.954$, $p < .05$). These people also showed a greater consistency between their affect toward Bush before the war and their acceptance of the "political goals" of U.S. foreign policy ($\Delta = .594$, $p < .05$), between affect toward Bush and patriotism ($\Delta = .043$, $p < .05$), as well as between prior support of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis and more importance placed on the "political goals" of U.S. foreign policy ($\Delta = .462$, n.s.). Although these between-group divergences were rather small, they nevertheless revealed a tendency of a greater logical consistency in policy reasoning concerning the Gulf War among those with higher levels of public affairs information.

## Summary and Discussion

This study examined voters' reasoning processes in forming their support of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis. We started with three main features of Sniderman *et al.*'s framework for studying voters' reasoning process concerning their public policy preferences: the reasoning chain process, the "likability heuristic," and the notion of population heterogeneity contingent upon political sophistication. We argued that the homogeneity in the public discourse or issue culture concerning the Gulf crisis and the intensive news media coverage of every stage of the crisis had important implications for how voters developed their support of Bush's handling of the situation. Two important implications examined in this study were greater emphasis on the factors that are salient in the issue culture -- affect toward the Commander-in-Chief, patriotism, and political goals of U.S. foreign policies -- as the basis for their support of Bush, and greater impact of television news exposure on voters' acceptance of the Administration's rationale for its policy initiatives as well as on their heightened patriotic feelings.

The issue of the Gulf War is significantly different from those examined in Sniderman *et al.*'s treatise. None of the issues examined in their study had anything operating as a unifying emotional chord like patriotism, which may be partly responsible for creating the phenomenon of a "rallying event" (Hugick & Gallup, 1991; Brody, 1991). Nor did any of those issues warrant almost automatic legitimacy of the President to supply the authoritative definition of the issue and the rationale of the policy treatment (Sigel, 1966; Hurwitz, 1989).

These conditions make our results not directly comparable to those presented by Sniderman and his colleagues. However, recognizing these unique conditions of an issue may help enrich our theoretical understandings of how voters reason about public policy issues. In light of voters' reasoning processes, we can summarize our results and four major conclusions as follows:

(1) The idea of a reasoning chain process is meaningful in two ways. First, there was

evidence of certain degrees of consistency between overall ideological orientation as well as affect toward Bush and support of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis. Although given the nature of the issue, ideological orientation measured on a bi-polar scale of liberalism *vs.* conservatism had a rather weak if any direct effect on approving Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis, it was nevertheless an important factor in the reasoning process through its direct effect on the mediating factors in the model. Also, voters' prior affective state toward Bush and attitudes toward his handling of the Gulf crisis filter, anchor, or structure their subsequent experiences and perceptions of the war, as evidenced by its effects on greater acceptance of the political goals of U.S. foreign policy and less intense emotional reactions to the destructive reality of the war. Second, those cognitive and affective variables placed after ideological orientation and affect in the causal sequence are shown to play significant roles in connecting the two more distant and/or abstract variables to approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis.

(2) The unique issue culture related to the Gulf War had some important implications for voters' reasoning processes. First, various affective responses played more important roles in determining voters' support of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis than they would have if a different issue were considered. This point was not tested directly in this study, but it could be inferred from the evidence of the powerful effects of positive affect toward Bush and patriotic feelings on approving Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis. Second, because of the monolithic nature of the political discourse concerning the war and the involvement of patriotism as an unifying emotion, one would expect more ready acceptance of the official rationale or arguments for the Bush Administration's policy initiatives. This expectation was supported by the roles played by the "political goals" of U.S. foreign policy and heightened patriotic feelings in voters' reasoning process concerning the war. One may go one step further to argue that such

consequences of the issue culture might have in turn further perpetuated the uniformity of the discourse concerning the issue.

(3) Television played an important but complex role in constructing voters' experiences of the issue. Our data showed that exposure to television news did not lead directly to more enthusiastic approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis. On the contrary, if exposure to television news had any robust **direct** effect, it was in the direction of eroding such support. However, one could hardly escape from television's showing of the wonders of the "video-game" war and American pride, respect, and patriotism. Exposure to television news led voters to experience the Gulf crisis as the Administration had defined it: it was a matter of principle, *i.e.*, deterring aggression and supporting democracy; and a matter of American pride and prestige, *i.e.*, patriotism. Very rarely do we see such significant effects of television news on the various facets of voters' reasoning process. No doubt, such powerful effects of television news exposure partly resulted from the homogeneity of the issue culture, intense psychological involvement in the issue among the voters, and very high levels of exposure to the real-time coverage of the war (Pan *et al.*, 1991; Gerbner, in press).

But television news did not have unidimensional effects, as was often assumed in some popular commentaries of television's performance during the Gulf crisis. Our evidence showed that exposure to television news was also related to more intense emotional reactions to the reality of the war, *e.g.*, feelings of disgust at the killing, feeling afraid for the troops, feeling sympathy for the Iraqi people, and so on. These emotions might also help to dampen the euphoria over the technological wonders, the apparent bloodlessness of the war, and the supposedly glorious victory.

(4) The index of public affairs information, which combined measures of newspaper

reading, following public affairs, and levels of public affairs information holding, was a reasonable approximation of political sophistication as a contingent factor influencing voters' reasoning processes. It did not show many **direct main** effects on the key factors in voters' reasoning processes concerning the war. But it did function to influence **how** voters reasoned about the war to form their approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis. The evidence showed that despite the relatively weak overall effect of ideological orientation in the whole sample, voters with higher levels of public affairs information did show a greater consistency between their ideological principles and affect toward their Commander-in-Chief and a greater consistency between their perceived importance of the political goals of U.S. foreign policies and approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf Crisis. Further, these people also showed a greater consistency between their affect toward Bush, pre-war approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis and perceptions of and emotional reactions to the Gulf War. In comparison, those with lower levels of public affairs information relied more heavily on patriotic feelings to form their approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis.

The results do not suggest empirical superiority of using levels of public affairs information as a proxy of political sophistication, compared with using formal years of schooling. In our sample, the index of public affairs information was significantly correlated with years of schooling ($r=.451$, $p < .001$). However, levels of public affairs information may come closer conceptually in measuring voters' cognitive resources in the domain of politics and public policies, which, in our view, are the basis of cognitive differentiation and integration, the two dimensions of political sophistication (Sniderman *et al.*, 1991; Neuman, 1986). Furthermore, although there is a small but significant portion of the voting population that is chronically ill-informed and apathetic to the political process (Hyman and Sheatsley, 1947; Neuman, 1986), political sophistication is not a stable individual trait as it would be implied by years of formal schooling. It is beyond the scope of this paper to clarify the conceptual issues here. Future studies in this area need to employ more direct measures that will tap into not only voters' cognitive resources related to a specific issue but also their intellectual abilities in mobilizing these resources in their policy reasoning processes.

One concern with the negative effects of levels of public affairs information and television news on the temporal increase in approving Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis is that of a ceiling effect. A ceiling effect would be a serious threat if those with higher levels of public affairs information had much higher pre-war approval ratings of George Bush. If so, the measurement scale would have censored the possibility of registering further increase, indicated by the shrunken variance in the post-war measure (see Kessler & Greenberg, 1981).

To examine this possibility, we compared the mean and variance differences of the Bush approval measures between high and low public affairs information groups. We found that the pre-war average of Bush approval of the whole sample was 2.74 on a four- point scale. Although above the mid-point of the scale, it was not high enough to censor further increase. The point was further strengthened by the observation that the variance of this variable decreased only .19 points from the pre- to post-war measures, clearly not severe enough to suggest a significant impact of a ceiling. In addition, the results showed that prior to the war, there was no difference in Bush's approval between high and low public affairs information groups. The war led to a greater increase in Bush approval in the low-information group, which was responsible for the observed negative effects of public affairs information. The significantly smaller variance in the post-war measure of Bush approval in the low-information group further indicated the lack of ceiling constraints on those with higher levels of public affairs information.

There are a number of weaknesses in our study. One is that we did not have sufficient data to examine covariance in temporal changes because the explanatory variables were only measured either in the pre-war or post-war survey. Therefore, our results still left uncertainties in causal inferences. In addition, our results say nothing about whether the voters were able to place themselves more consistently on the liberalism *vs.* conservatism scale after the war.

Second, our study revealed rather weak relationships between ideological orientations, prior attitudes and affect toward Bush, and the factors that were placed in the mediating positions of the reasoning process model, *i.e.*, foreign policy goals and affective responses. It did not provide clear evidence of the relative salience or importance of the cognitive or affective factors in voters' reasoning process. Further, our conceptual framework does not contain detailed psychological mechanisms concerning the effects of ideological orientation, affect toward Bush, and prior Bush approval.

However, despite the weaknesses, the evidence from our study revealed rather complex and systematic voter reasoning processes concerning the Gulf war. It showed how television news coverage of the war influenced voters' reasoning processes. It confirmed a number of concerns about television performance during the war expressed in popular commentaries, and the limitations of some of the simplistic views of what television news would do in public opinion dynamics.

# Endnotes

1. One should note the conceptual similarities and differences between the two ways of conceptualizing "cognitive heuristics" in Tversky & Kahneman's formulation and in Sniderman *et al.*'s study. Although both formulations deal with certain simple decision rules and their functions in economizing information processing and anchoring judgments, Tversky and Kahneman's formulation deals with universal cognitive economizing processes or biases across all individuals. In comparison, Sniderman *et al.*'s "heuristics" are closer to those in Chaiken's heuristic model of persuasion (1987), where the functioning of heuristics is contingent upon a number of factors. In Sniderman *et al.*'s case, the contingent condition is political sophistication broadly defined.

2. Part of the consideration in formulating this model was the availability of data. The point will become clearer in the methods section.

3. Selectivity may operate at various junctions in the message reception process: exposure, attention, perception, and retention (Hyman & Sheatsley, 1947). But it may be roughly conceived as consisting of "take-in" and "retrieval" mechanisms. While the first refers to individuals actively seeking information to reinforce their prior attitudes or points of view (Frey, 1986), the latter refers to active decoding of information based upon prior cognitive representations (Fazio & Williams, 1986; Higgins & King, 1981; Iyengar, 1990; Wyer & Srull, 1981). However, this model is incapable of testing these specific ideas.

4. The final measures were created based upon V359 and V360 in the first wave and V2410-V2412 in the second wave.

5. Based upon V2518 to V2529.

6. Based on V2403 to V2407.

7. The variable numbers are V64, V66, V67, V71, V72.

8. The variable numbers are V395 to V403. The news personalities include Dan Quayle, George Mitchell, William Rehnquist, Mikael Gorbachev, Margaret Thatcher, Nelson Mandela, and Tom Foley. The knowledge index has a reliability coefficient of .78 (Cronbach's alpha).

9. The variable numbers are V547, V549, V552, V554, V602, V663, V664. When the family income value was missing, it was replaced by the valid response to the respondent's income. All missing values in education, occupational prestige, and family income were replaced by the predicted values obtained in regression models involving the other two variables, plus age and gender.

10. Three types of variables entered in the model: constant background variables (*e.g.*, demographics), potential changing variables fixed at pre-war measures (*e.g.*, ideological orientation, feeling toward Bush, and news media uses), and changing variables (approving Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis, importance of foreign policy goals and affective responses

toward the war). A simple mixed-effect model of Bush approval would be (Hsiao, 1986; Kessler & Greenberg, 1981):

$$y_1 = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 w + \beta_3 z + \epsilon_1 \quad (1)$$
$$y_2 = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta^*_2 w + \beta_3 z + \beta_4 y_1 + \beta_5 x_2 + \epsilon_2 \quad (2)$$

where y is the Bush approval measure at t=1, 2 respectively; x is a vector of changing variables measured at t=1, 2 respectively; w is a vector of the potential changing variables fixed at t=1, there effects on $y_1$ and $y_2$ may vary, indicated by $\beta_2$ and $\beta^*_2$; and z is a vector of constant background variables.

Assuming $\beta_0=\beta_0$, $\beta_1=\beta_1$, $\beta_3=\beta_3$, and subtracting (1) from (2), we have

$$\Delta y = (\beta^*_2 - \beta_2)w + \beta_4 y_1 + \beta_5 x_2 + (\epsilon_2 - \epsilon_1) \quad (3)$$

Because only $x_2$ were available in the data, $x_1$ were dropped from equations (1) and (2). According to the path model depicted in Figure 2, $x_2$ also were predicted by both w and z. A necessary assumption under the constraint of the data is $x_2=x_1$.

11. The stability of Bush approval is indicated by the effect of pre-war measure shown in the first row. The low stability coefficient partly resulted from measurement unreliability. Because approving Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis was a single item variable, we did not have sufficient data to separate measurement unreliability from instability (see Heise, 1969; Wiley & Wiley, 1970).

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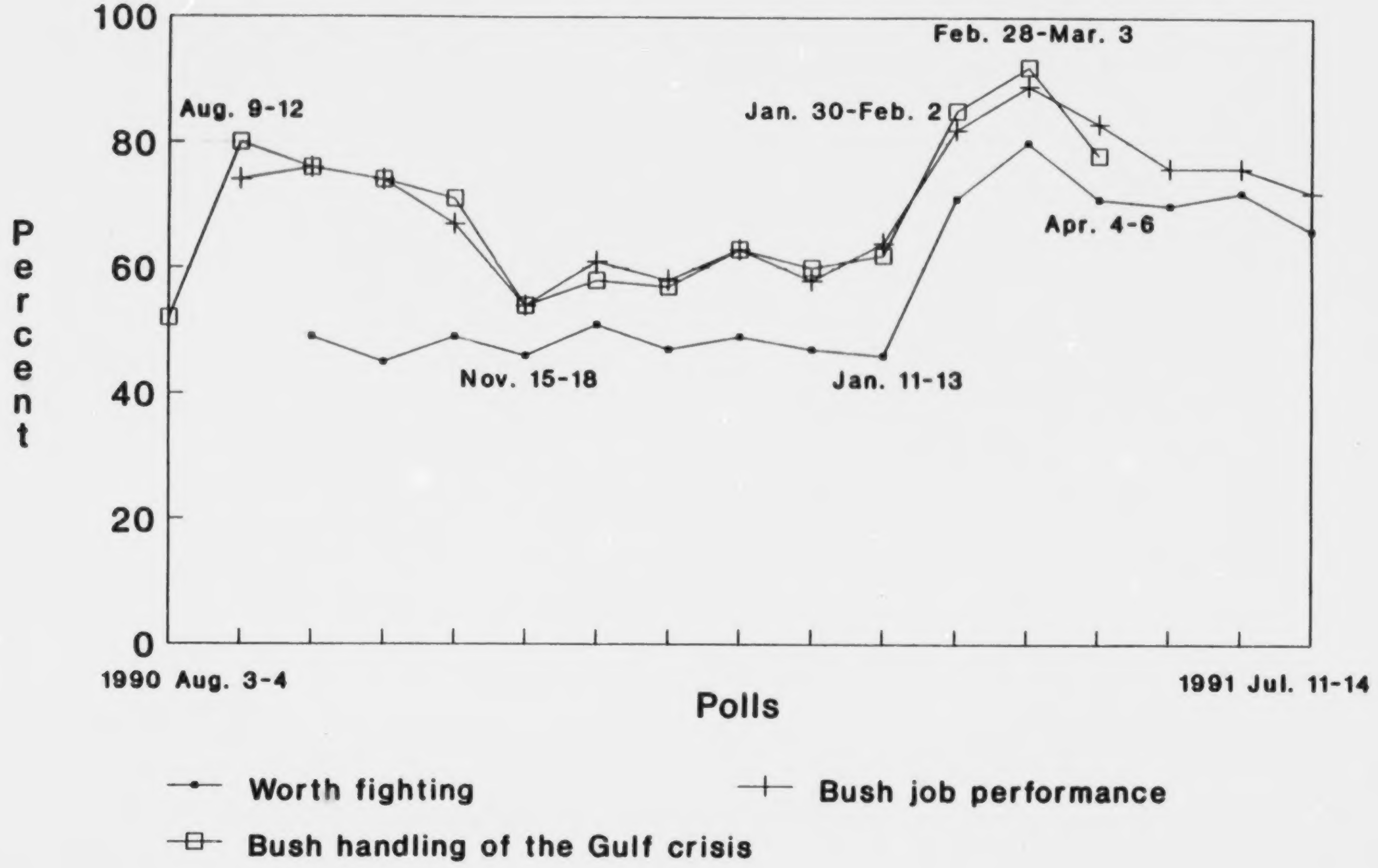
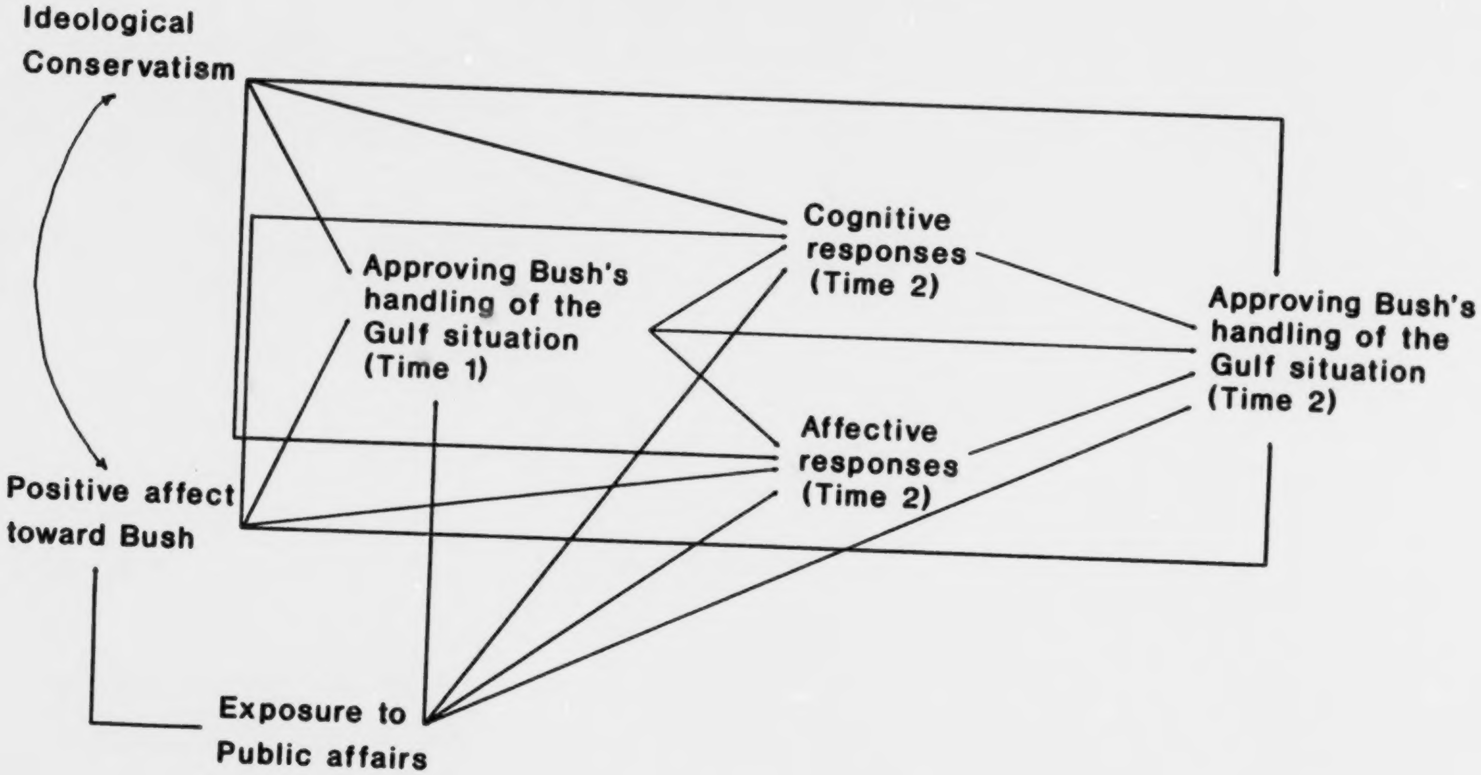
Figure 1

Public Opinion Trends During the Gulf Conflict



Data source: Gallup Poll Monthly

Figure 2
A Temporal Reasoning Chain Model of Approving Bush's Gulf Policy


Ideological Conservatism
Cognitive responses (Time 2)
Approving Bush's handling of the Gulf situation (Time 1)
Approving Bush's handling of the Gulf situation (Time 2)
Affective responses (Time 2)
Positive affect toward Bush
Exposure to Public affairs

## Table 1
## Predicting Changes in Approving Bush's Handling of the Gulf Situation[1]

| | Approving Bush's Handling of the Gulf Situation ($T_2$) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model I | | Model II | |
| | B | β | B | β |
| Approving Bush's handling of the Gulf situation (Time 1)[2] | .208* | .249 | .186* | .223 |
| | (.035) | | (.034) | |
| Ideological conservatism | .074* | .091 | .055* | .067 |
| | (.020) | | (.019) | |
| Feeling toward Bush | .126* | .307 | .108* | .263 |
| | (.012) | | (.012) | |
| Media public affairs | | | | |
| Newspaper public affairs exposure | -.119* | -.127 | -.116* | -.124 |
| | (.024) | | (.023) | |
| TV public affairs exposure | -.023 | -.024 | -.057* | -.062 |
| | (.023) | | (.023) | |
| Goals of foreign policies | | | | |
| Functional goals | | | -.002 | -.020 |
| | | | (.002) | |
| Political goals | | | .012* | .121 |
| | | | (.002) | |
| Affective responses | | | | |
| Emotional reactions to the war | | | -.004 | -.039 |
| | | | (.037) | |
| Patriotic feelings | | | .265* | .172 |
| | | | (.023) | |
| $\Delta R^2$ | .051 | | .049 | |

Notes:

1. In both models, the six demographic variables, age, gender, occupational prestige, education, family income, and race (black *vs.* others), are included as control variables. The $\Delta R^2$ in Model I is the percent of additional variance accounted for after the demographics and stability. The $\Delta R^2$ in Model II is the percent of additional variance accounted for above and beyond Model I. The numbers in the parentheses are standard errors.
2. The numbers shown in this row are stability coefficients. The coeffients in the remaining portion of the table are as effects on changes in the approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf situation.

* $p \leq .05$.

## Table 2
## Predicting Changes in Approving of Bush's Handling of the Gulf Situation by Levels of Public Affairs Information[1]

| | Low Public Affairs Info. | | | | High Public Affairs Info. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model I | | Model II | | Model I | | Model II | |
| | B | β | B | β | B | β | B | β |
| Approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf situation (Time 1)[2] | .214*<br>(.033) | .274 | .202*<br>(.032) | .258 | .189*<br>(.033) | .215 | .167*<br>(.033) | .190 |
| Ideological conservatism | .060<br>(.031) | .069 | .039<br>(.030) | .045 | .068*<br>(.026) | .086 | .048<br>(.026) | .061 |
| Feeling toward Bush | .080*<br>(.016) | .209 | .070*<br>(.016) | .184 | .179*<br>(.017) | .408 | .153*<br>(.017) | .348 |
| Media public affairs | | | | | | | | |
| Newspaper public affairs exposure | -.073<br>(.052) | -.052 | -.075<br>(.051) | -.053 | -.311*<br>(.062) | -.164 | -.288*<br>(.060) | -.152 |
| TV public affairs exposure | .002<br>(.033) | .003 | -.053<br>(.033) | -.059 | -.062<br>(.033) | -.061 | -.077*<br>(.032) | -.077 |
| Goals of foreign policies | | | | | | | | |
| Functional goals | | | -.004<br>(.003) | -.047 | | | -.001<br>(.004) | -.009 |
| Political goals | | | .011*<br>(.003) | .122 | | | .011*<br>(.003) | .110 |
| Affective responses | | | | | | | | |
| Emotional reactions to the war | | | .006<br>(.003) | .067 | | | -.011*<br>(.003) | -.111 |
| Patriotic feelings | | | .309*<br>(.053) | .207 | | | .199*<br>(.051) | .126 |
| $\Delta R^2$ | .045 | | .066 | | .155 | | .038 | |

**Notes:**

1. In both models, the six demographic variables, age, gender, occupational prestige, education, family income, and race (black *vs*. others), are included as control variables. The paths predicting feeling to Bush are not shown for simplicity. The $\Delta R^2$ for Model I is additional variance accounted for after demographics and stability. The $\Delta R^2$ for Model II is the additional variance accounted for above and beyond Model I. The numbers in the parentheses are standard errors.
2. The numbers shown in this row are stability coefficients. The coefficients in the remaining portion of this table are effects on changes in the approval of Bush's handling of the Gulf situation.

* $p \leq .05$.

### Table 3
### Effects of Exposure to Public Affairs Media on Cognitive and Affective Responses to the War

| Dependent Variables | Newspaper<br>B | β | Television<br>B | β |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WHOLE SAMPLE** | | | | |
| Goals of U.S. foreign policy ($T_2$) | | | | |
| Functional goals | 1.521*<br>(.348) | .156 | .829*<br>(.300) | .086 |
| political goals | -.021<br>(.348) | -.002 | 1.205*<br>(.300) | .125 |
| Patriotic feeling ($T_2$) | .031<br>(.020) | .051 | .100*<br>(.018) | .166 |
| Emotional reactions to the war ($T_2$) | .479<br>(.318) | -.050 | 1.353*<br>(.275) | .143 |
| Positive affect toward Bush ($T_1$) | .140<br>(.078) | .062 | .159*<br>(.068) | .070 |
| **LOW PUBLIC AFFAIRS EXPOSURE GROUP** | | | | |
| Goals of U.S. foreign policy ($T_2$) | | | | |
| Functional goals | 2.720*<br>(.747) | .155 | .960*<br>(.474) | .085 |
| political goals | -.278<br>(.671) | -.018 | 1.162*<br>(.426) | .117 |
| Patriotic feeling ($T_2$) | .063<br>(.038) | .066 | .139*<br>(.024) | .230 |
| Emotional reactions to the war ($T_2$) | .971<br>(.581) | .035 | 1.442*<br>(.369) | .154 |
| Positive affect toward Bush ($T_1$) | .128<br>(.155) | .035 | .190<br>(.098) | .080 |
| **HIGH PUBLIC AFFAIRS EXPOSURE GROUP** | | | | |
| Goals of U.S. foreign policy ($T_2$) | | | | |
| Functional goals | -.397<br>(.700) | -.025 | .566<br>(.366) | .069 |
| political goals | -.008<br>(.818) | -.001 | 1.218*<br>(.428) | .122 |
| Patriotic feeling ($T_2$) | -.016<br>(.049) | -.014 | .058*<br>(.026) | .090 |
| Emotional reactions to the war ($T_2$) | 1.506<br>(.790) | .079 | 1.375*<br>(.419) | .136 |
| Positive affect toward Bush ($T_1$) | .028<br>(.181) | .007 | .119<br>(.095) | .052 |

Notes:
1. The parameters in this table are part of the model shown in Figure 3. The six demographic variables, age, gender, occupational prestige, education, family income, and race (black *vs.* others), are included as control variables. The numbers in the parentheses are standard errors.

* $p \leq .05$.

## Table 4
## Effects of Ideology, Affect toward Bush, and Initial Bush Approval on Cognitive and Affective Responses to the War

| Dependent Variables | Ideological conservatism | | Positive aff. toward Bush | | Approving Bush's handling of the Gulf situation ($T_1$) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | beta | B | beta | B | beta |
| **WHOLE SAMPLE** | | | | | | |
| Goals of U.S. foreign policy ($T_2$) | | | | | | |
| Functional goals | -.509* | -.059 | .131 | .031 | -.082 | -.009 |
| | (.240) | | (.142) | | (.284) | |
| Political goals | -.006 | -.001 | .434* | .101 | .622* | .072 |
| | (.240) | | (.142) | | (.284) | |
| Patrotic feeling ($T_2$) | .046* | .085 | .047* | .176 | .028 | .052 |
| | (.014) | | (.008) | | (.017) | |
| Emotional reactions to the war ($T_2$) | -.176 | -.021 | -.135 | -.032 | -1.009* | -.118 |
| | (.220) | | (.130) | | (.260) | |
| Positive affect toward Bush ($T_1$)[2] | .802* | .281 | .-- | | .-- | |
| | (.078) | | | | | |

Notes:

1. The parameters in this table are part of the model shown in Figure 3. The six demographic variables, age, gender, occupational prestige, education, family income, and race (black *vs.* others), are included as control variables. The numbers in the parentheses are standard errors.
2. Covariance or correlation. No causal direction is assumed.

* $p \leq .05$.

### Table 4 (Cont.)
### Effects of Ideology, Affect toward Bush, and Initial Bush Approval on Cognitive and Affective Responses to the War

| Dependent Variables | Ideological conservatism | | Positive aff. toward Bush | | Approving Bush's handling of the Gulf situation ($T_1$) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | beta | B | beta | B | beta |
| **LOW PUBLIC AFFAIRS EXPOSURE GROUP** | | | | | | |
| Goals of U.S. foreign policy ($T_2$) | | | | | | |
| Functional goals | -.214 | -.020 | .294 | .061 | -.364 | .037 |
| | (.420) | | (.217) | | (.444) | |
| Political goals | -.085 | -.009 | .151 | .036 | .375 | .044 |
| | (.378) | | (.195) | | (.399) | |
| Patrotic feeling ($T_2$) | .045* | .077 | .025* | .097 | .031 | .059 |
| | (.022) | | (.011) | | (.023) | |
| Emotional reactions to the war ($T_2$) | .397 | .044 | .047 | .012 | -1.009* | -.125 |
| | (.327) | | (.169) | | (.346) | |
| Positive affect toward Bush ($T_1$)[2] | .470* | .206 | .-- | .-- | .-- | .-- |
| | (.085) | | | | | |
| **HIGH PUBLIC AFFAIRS EXPOSURE GROUP** | | | | | | |
| Goals of U.S. foreign policy ($T_2$) | | | | | | |
| Functional goals | -.722* | -.111 | -.161 | -.045 | .367 | .051 |
| | (.271) | | (.178) | | (.351) | |
| Political goals | -.103 | -.013 | .745* | .170 | .837* | .095 |
| | (.317) | | (.208) | | (.410) | |
| Patrotic feeling ($T_2$) | .042* | .089 | .068* | .243 | .024 | .042 |
| | (.019) | | (.012) | | (.025) | |
| Emotional reactions to the war ($T_2$) | -.557 | -.070 | -.320 | -.072 | -.851* | -.096 |
| | (.306) | | (.200) | | (.396) | |
| Positive affect toward Bush ($T_1$)[2] | .651* | .363 | | | | |
| | (.065) | | | | | |

Notes:
1. The parameters in this table are part of the model shown in Figure 3. The six demographic variables, age, gender, occupational prestige, education, family income, and race (black *vs.* others), are included as control variables. The numbers in the parentheses are standard errors.
2. Covariance or correlation. No causal direction is assumed.
* $p \leq .05$.

# VOICES OF DISSENT DURING THE GULF WAR: DID THE MEDIA REGARD THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT AS A LEGITIMATE CHALLENGER?

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# VOICES OF DISSENT DURING THE GULF WAR: DID THE MEDIA REGARD THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT AS A LEGITIMATE CHALLENGER?

Players in the political process contend for power and legitimacy as they seek to influence policy outcomes. Their success often depends on defining policy issues in ways that control public response. Policy issues are contested in the symbolic arena of public discourse via the media.

The Gulf war presented a stark policy issue: the merit of waging war in the Persian Gulf. The issue was heavily debated by political elites and challengers up to the onset of war, during which time public opinion on the merits of war was split. The Bush administration struggled to find a policy rationale that would build support for war. Meanwhile, the anti-war movement mobilized to challenge the administration's policy with its interpretations of the issue, and sought to strengthen its own claim to legitimacy by challenging the Bush administration's policies. But, in order to be effective, the anti-war movement needed to be endowed with legitimacy by mainstream groups, the media, and the public. In this study, I examine whether the media accorded legitimacy to the anti-war movement during the Gulf conflict as an indication of the movement's effectiveness as a challenger.

Why focus on the media's role in the legitimation of the anti-war movement? The media are not passive conduits for various competing definitions of issues. On the contrary, media take an active role by deciding what positions are newsworthy. News organizations play an important role in issue formation, conflict reduction, political legitimation, and political change. Thus, for those who have a stake in policy outcome, political influence depends on gaining access for one's position and a portrayal that will bestow legitimacy.

To examine the media's role in legitimating the anti-war movement, I compare media treatment of the movement as a whole and one of its more mainstream organizations, the Military Families Support Network. I am interested in seeing whether there is variance in media treatment depending on the type of challenger, a challenger being a group or collection opposed to the war. I chose to examine Military Families Support Network because it had greater potential for legitimation than many anti-war organizations, and because the media played an instrumental role in its creation. In all my analysis, I am interested in changes over time, particularly before and after the onset of war when public support differed.

## The Media's Role in Social Control

What prompts the media to accord legitimacy to some groups or positions while denying that to others? An explanation might be offered in a body of theory that views the media as agents of social control in maintaining the status quo.Within this body of theory are alternative views explaining how and why the media act as agents of social control, which, for the purpose of discussion, I roughly categorize into two broad perspectives. The first perspective says that media are essentially 'conservative' in their coverage, because of a combination of market forces, operational constraints, and journalistic practices. Ideology takes no role in this view (Gans, 1979). Another perspective sees the media as actively and purposively engaged on behalf of a ruling class in diverting opposition and constraining political and social deviance. This, a Marxist perspective views media as instruments of legitimation for the ruling class (Westergaard, 1977). Here ideology plays a key role in securing power for those who rule the dominant institutions.

In either view, the effect on media content is the same. Media reinforce dominant social values and legitimate the positions of elites and respectable groups. Media also give prominence to views and solutions to problems within established rules of society. Conversely, media give negative or unequal treatment to nonconformist views and deviant behavior, views and behavior that challenge or offend dominant social values (Gans, 1979; Lauderdale and Estep, 1980; Bennett, 1980).

These alternative perspectives vary in their explanation as to how control is exercised and at what level it occurs. For example, in a Marxist perspective, control takes place at a system level, and media are systematically used for purposes of legitimation of the capitalist state. Media omit views of class conflict and exploitation that challenge the prevailing distribution of power and control (Hall, 1977).

An alternative perspective attributes conservative tendencies in news coverage to organizational and occupational demands rather than a conspiracy to legitimate the interests of the capitalist state. It is through a combination of constraints--personal and institutional choice, external pressures, and anticipating what large, heterogeneous audiences may expect--that produces media content that is predominantly 'centrist' in its views and values. Gans (1979) for example, sees media coverage as a product of the characteristics and the social milieu of those who make the news, who assume the audience has similar outlooks and values as themselves.

There are problems in both of these perspectives. Implicit in the Marxist perspective is the assumption that all media are in essence a homogeneous entity that have a consistent ideology. As such, this perspective makes little or no allowance for variance in media coverage of challenging views. The problem with the "conservative tendencies" perspective is a lack of consideration for systemic forces or ideological processes.

The position taken here is essentially a compromise between these two broad perspectives. The media are seen to act generally, but not purposely, to support mainstream social values. That support has less to do with conscious motives or interests of those in power than with the organization of society, its dominant values, and economic constraints on media organizations. Nevertheless, I do not discount the potential for ideology in influencing personal and institutional choice. Ideology is not seen, however, the locus of control; it is seen as one potential influence. Moreover, I do not subscribe to a strict definition of ideology or how its operates.

What I recognize here is that there are forces in society that maintain the existing social order, an order reflected and expressed in the media. Media on the whole, especially mainstream media, are not forces of radical change in society; they do not provide favorable conditions for such change. The media tend to appeal to mainstream values and opinions that are already understood and accepted but withdraw from positions that challenge the social order (Bennett, 1980). The influence of the media, as Janowitz remarks (1960, p 402) "is not in dramatic conversion of public opinion, but rather in setting limits within which public debate on controversial issues takes place." As proponents of a centrist ideology, the media allow criticisms and challenges, but within acceptable limits of public debate. As such, a challenger of the social order would not be within those limits. That is not to say that the media never play a role in social change. However, that role is largely reformist in nature and does not threaten existing power structures (Gans, 1979).

Media, then, as agents of social control preserve the legitimacy of the established political, economic, and social system (Paletz and Entman, 1981; Gitlin, 1980; Lauderdale and Estep, 1980). As reinforcers of established authority structures, they play a vital role in system maintenance and stability (Gans, 1979; Olien, Tichenor and Donohue, 1989).

## Media Coverage of Social Movements and Groups

Olien, Tichenor and Donohue (1980), perceive the media as "guard dogs" for powerful interests and mainstream values. As such, initial reporting of counter-social movements will generally be skeptical or nonexistent. Coverage of the emerging social movement is not likely to change until its has been legitimized in the system. The length and degree of coverage depends upon events that define where the balance of power rests, and when it is not with the opposition, the counter-movement is usually marginalized.

Coverage of social movement groups will likely vary depending on the particular group and its perceived legitimacy. Coverage of more deviant groups will differ from more mainstream groups. Mainstream groups are likely to be shown as legitimate contenders for political power, while deviant groups will be delegitimized (Paletz and Entman, 1981; Shoemaker, 1984). Likewise, the more closely the groups interests and values coincide with political elites, the more likely their positions will be given prominence and incorporated in prevailing definitions of problems (Gitlin, 1980).

## Background on the Anti-War Movement and MFSN

It is necessary to describe the anti-war group Military Families Support Network (MFSN) and the larger movement in order to see what it was the media was responding to in their coverage. The following is a brief description of the anti-war movement's and MFSN's composition, positions, goals, and strategies.

The Gulf war anti-war movement, had a broad constituency--veterans groups, environmentalists groups, the Christian clergy, the heads of the nine big unions, conscientious objectors, blacks, Hispanics, feminists, gays and lesbians--all with their own interests and positions. This anti-war movement was quick to mobilize because an infrastructure was already in place, and by the beginning of October two national umbrella coalitions had formed.

The first coalition, the National Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention in the Midddle East, was founded under the leadership former Attorney General Ramsey Clark and activist Dick Gregory. Its positions were in general anti-interventionist and anti-imperialism, and from the outset it alienated potential support by not condemning Iraq's seizure of Kuwait. This coalition was comprised of more radical groups such as ACT UP and Palestine Solidarity Committee whose tactics involved more extreme actions such as civil disobedience and flag burning.

The other, the National Campaign for Peace in the Mideast, was a coalition of more than 500 anti-war groups, mostly mainstream groups such as SANE/FREEZE. This coalition tended to be more moderate in its positions, goals and tactics. For example, it condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, but also opposed a military offensive; and while it organized demonstrations, it avoided more extreme tactics.

Tensions in and between groups were manifested between those who were proponents of collective security and those whose position was anti-interventionist; between those who condemned Saddam Hussein and those who refrained; and between those who were only opposed to this war and between those long-term goals were much broader. However, all groups were in agreement on one important position, one learned from Vietnam: oppose the war, but not the warriors.

The media initially focused on those perceived leaders of the movement, veteran activists Ron Kovic, Daniel Ellsberg, and former Attorney General Ramsey Clark. But other leaders sprang up among the movement's "unlikely footsoldiers," most notably Alex Molnar, Chairperson of MFSN. The larger movement was quick to embrace MFSN as it provided the movement with a "most potent policitical force" and a credible defense against the criticism that by not supporting the war, they were not supporting the troops.[1]

The media played an instrumental role in helping create this grass-roots organization. In late August, Alex Molnar, a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and father of a Marine son deployed to the Gulf, wrote an angry, eloquent letter opposing the Bush administration's policy in the Gulf. The letter was published in the *New York Times* , and, in the few days following, network newscasts brought even more nation-wide attention to Molnar. Public response was immediate and overwhelming. Molnar received thousands of letters and phone calls, most of them in support of this position, and many of them from family members and friends of troops. The Fund for New Priorities, a non-profit organization committed to helping liberal causes, contacted Molnar and offered financial assistance and guidance in establishing an organization. On October 10, a core group of military family members met in Washington, D.C., to hold a press conference and announce the formal project of Military Families Support Network. Out of the public doubts concerning Gulf policy grew a grass-roots organization comprised of military family members, mainstream Americans whose personal stake in a war perhaps made them seem more justified in opposing it.

This anti-war group had other strengths in gaining legitimacy as a challenger. Composition of the group--mainstream Americans who had never opposed their government before--gave it additional credibility. Finally, the group's policy of working within the system in their strategies did, for the most part, gain support for the group.[2]

Legitimacy: Its Definition and Factors that Are Likely to Affect Its Accordance

Legitimacy, defined here, is a quality accorded to a coalition or group that conveys its right to be heard, as an entity, regarding its views and claims in public discourse and in the court of public opinion.

The following are factors that are likely to affect the legitimation process. First are the challenger's characteristics: type of members and leaders of which it is comprised; the challenger's ideology, views and goals; the tactics and strategies in achieving its goals; and where each of these is relative to mainstream values and norms.Second are factors external to the challenger that will affect its legitimation, such as its opponents or allies and their position relative to the mainstream. Also important is public support for either the challenger's tactics, views and goals.

All of these factors play a role in the media's accordance of legitimacy to the challenging group or movement. The media take their cues from the larger environment, and support for the challenger from political elites, public opinion, and other mainstream opposition, is likely to play a significant role in influencing the media's legitimation.

I hypothesize that due to the actual and perceived differences of the anti-war movement and one of its groups, the Military Family Support Network, the movement would not be accorded the same degree of legitimacy by the media as the group. That is to say, the media do not treat all challengers the same and variance will depend on two factors: the actual and perceived differences between the group's and movement's characteristics and positions.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to test the above hypothesis, I compared through content analysis media treatment of the anti-war group MFSN and the larger anti-war movement.

### Samples

I was primarily interested in seeing how either MFSN or the larger movement would be treated in television news, since about ninety percent of the public used network news as there main source of information on the Gulf conflict (Dennis et al, 1991). *Vanderbilt Index* was searched from August 1990 through March 1991 revealing a total of 57 news segments that contained coverage on the anti-war movement. However, only thirty-five of these segments provided enough material to analyze.

Because there were only a handful of segments on MFSN in network nightly news, I turned to print for a more comprehensive sample. Searches were done for all of the newspapers indexed on *Dialogue* and *Nexis* computer databases. About 130 articles were located from twenty-two national and regional newspapers. Out of the articles, forty-seven contained enough material to analyze. An additional search was also done through national news magazines on *Protrack*. That search revealed another three articles in *Time* and *Newsweek* , and were added to the print sample for a total of fifty articles.

In an attempt to control for the differences in print and television's form, articles and broadcast segments were selected and added to each sample. Fifteen national television news segments were selected from MFSN's collection of television coverage. Thirty articles that focused on the anti-war movement were selected from the 130 articles located above. These articles had the added feature of containing material on both MFSN and the movement, so comparisons could be made within an article. Each sample for MFSN and the movement now contained a total of sixty-five cases of both print and television content.

## Measurements

Legitimacy in news coverage is demonstrated in both prominence of the subject and how the character of the subject is portrayed. Prominence is indicated by the degree of coverage, placement of the article or program, and the degree to which the subject is featured within the article or program.

Character is also defined as the "media portrayal of the group" (Shoemaker, 1984). The media portrayal of the group or its character has been conceptualized has having three potential dimensions, here labeled Evaluation, Normative Tactics, and Viability.

Evaluation is the dimension that reveals the writers attitude towards the group as a whole. It is measured through the author's assertions in describing the group, a member, and an attribute. Specific indicators of this dimension included in the measuring instrument are as follows (measuring instruments are included in the appendix): 1) if there is an human interest element in story and the degree of sympathy or antipathy; 2) phrases that refer to an attribute of group, member, a possession, or its actions and the valence of each ; 3) what nouns and adjectives are used to describe the group or member and the valence of each; 4) what is the group's portrayed status relative to the mainstream. For example, a mainstream opponent would be a member of the establishment such as a church leader, teacher, or politician. At the other end of the scale would be a radical activist, an extremist as defined by his/her tactics. A Ku Klux Klan member would for example also fall under this latter category.

Normative Tactics reveals the tactics of the group that the journalist finds newsworthy. Each tactic is listed and then evaluated as to how normative it would likely be considered by mainstream norms or standards. For example, a terrorist act or destruction of property would be at one extreme, while lobbying a congressperson or placing an ad is at the other. Also measured is the inclusion of a rationale if arrests or symbolic gestures were made.

Viability is how the group's position and resources are presented, indicating its ability to reach its goals. The first items indicate whether there is coverage of the group's position, goals, and rationale. The next indicator identifies assertions made about the reasonableness of the group's position or goals and the valence of each. A third indicator is the identification of the group's resources; statements about resources are evaluated on a scale of how limited or ample resources are presented. The final two indicators identify the group's allies or opponents mentioned in the text and evaluates each one's status relative to the mainstream.

While the same dimensions were measured in both MFSN and movement samples, a slightly different measuring instrument was developed for each (see Appendix). Reliability for coding assertions measures r = .93 overall. Because the sampled articles and television segments varied considerably in length and content, some did not have assertions for all of the character indicators. Wherever there were no assertions for an indicator, the value was indicated as missing data. As a result, the mean indicator scores are based on different Ns, and the statistical tests are based only on the assertions present in either an article or segment.

Seven point scales were used to measure indicators throughout. Dichtomous items were summed into additive scales. A "no" response on these items took a negative value, while a "yes" response took a positive value. Assertions were averaged for each indicator on each dimension, and then those values were averaged to provide a mean score for each dimension within the article or television news segment.

Mean dimension scores were then averaged across articles or television news segments to provide mean scores for each dimension. A total character score was derived for each article or segment, and these were then averaged together to produce an overall character score. Further information on how this was done is illustrated throughout the discussion below.

## RESULTS

What follows is a comparative analysis of media coverage of MFSN and the anti-war movement. First is a description of how extensively the movement and group were covered in the media. Next are comparisons between character treatments including quantitative and qualitative differences.

### The Prominence of MFSN and the Anti-War Movement in Media Coverage

Comparisons between prominence of MFSN and anti-war movement coverage are not entirely meaningful because of differences in the sampling of coverage for each. What follows, however, is a description of how extensive the coverage was for the group and the movement as a whole.

Coverage on MFSN was not extensive in early evening network news. According to the group's own inventory of coverage, there may have been only five evening network news segments. On the other hand, taken as a whole in, coverage of MFSN was fairly extensive across all types of media. About twenty-two network news programs featured MFSN. Group members appeared in another eight national syndicated television and cable news programs. In addition, eight regional and local television news shows, thirteen national network and public radio programs, and twenty-six local radio stations featured the group.

In print coverage MFSN, was either identified or featured in at least one hundred articles in twenty regional and national newspapers, and in these five national magazines--*People Weekly, Life, Time,* and *Newsweek.* Thus, while MFSN was not highly visible in the most attended source, network news; taken as a whole, this one anti-war group received a fair amount of media attention.

The print sample--the entire population of newspaper articles--provides a reliable picture of the group's visibility. Articles on the group started appearing in October, with the heaviest coverage in November and January. Coverage fell off in December and after the war began in January; there were only five articles after the war began until coverage picked up again in February. A total of twenty-nine articles appeared before the war and seventeen after the war began. Of the latter, five articles appeared after the war ended in March.

Prominence in print coverage was also measured by article placement within the newspaper, group prominence within the article, and the number of words in an article. Within newspapers, 28 percent of the articles were on the front page of the first section, 16 percent were on the first page of another section, and 56 percent were placed elsewhere in the paper. Thirty-two of the fifty articles took MFSN as the main focus of the story, while the eighteen featured the group as a part of a broader focus. The number of words in an article ranged from 105 to 1,983 with an average of 891 words before the war, but then dropping to an average of 646 after the war.

In summary, print coverage of MFSN was fairly extensive, with the most coverage and the longest articles occurring before the war. Amount of coverage fell off in the few weeks after the war began and articles were shorter in length. Overall, MFSN's placement was not that prominent within the newspaper itself. It is difficult to conclude from these findings that this group was given legitimacy through prominence in news coverage.

### Degree of Coverage on the Anti-War Movement

Because the sample of print coverage here was derived from a non-probability sampling technique, conclusions about the movement's prominence in newspaper coverage are unreliable. It is interesting, however, that patterns of coverage are similar to MFSN's, with the heaviest coverage in November and on the day preceding the beginning of war.

Since the television sample contains nearly all the nightly news segments, most noteworthy are the conclusions regarding the prominence of the anti-war movement in network news during the Gulf conflict. Coverage began with one segment in September and ended March 2, 1991 for a total of thirty-eight segments. Segments were divided into six periods. The twenty-two segments preceding the war totaled about thirty-seven minutes, while the fifteen during the war totaled eighteen minutes; the segments after the war were noticeably shorter. The movement's prominence dropped off sharply after the onset of war. A *Conference on Issues and Media* 's study found that newspapers during the first three weeks of the war devoted an average of just 2.7 percent of their space to peace activities and network nightly news devoted a mere 0.7 of its airtime to such activities (Dennis, et al, 1991).

## A Comparison of the Character Treatment for MFSN and the Anti-War Movement

### Treatment of the MFSN'S Character in Television and Print Coverage

There were a total of fifteen television programs content analyzed on each of the three character diminsions of legitimacy. Mean scores for each dimension range from one to seven with four being neutral, so that a score above four is increasingly legitimating. Since there were only two programs after the war began results apply to the entire television sample. Television news coverage of MFSN received a 6.28 score (standard deviation 0.716; n=15) on the Evaluation dimension, a 7.0 score (standard deviation 0.0; n=14) on the Normative Tactics dimension, a 5.68 score (standard deviation 1.195; n=15) on the Viability dimension, and a total character score of 6.31 (standard deviation 0.506; n=15).

Table 1 shows the results of the print coverage sample. Included is the mean score of fifty articles' assertions and the number of articles for each dimension. Note that the scores are mostly high and with a few exceptions are fairly stable over time. There are no statistically significant differences between means before and during the war on each dimension.

There are two noticeable drops in Viability scores, just before and during the war. The first drop can be explained by coverage in four articles that delegitimated a MFSN strategy. The drop in scores during the war can be primarily attributed to two factors. First, articles were consistently shorter in length during this period and the content typically was excluded about the group's goals, positions, rationale, resources, and allies--indicators of this dimension. Second, there were more negative assertions about the reasonableness of the group's position and its likelihood in reaching its goals.

Despite these few exceptions, overall the results indicate that both print and television news coverage legitimated MFSN's character. Not surprisingly, MFSN's scores on the Normative Tactics dimension were the highest of the three dimensions because of the group's policy of only using normative tactics.

The group also received high scores on the four indicators of the Evaluation dimension. The group was typically identified as "family members of military serving in the gulf who opposed policies." Other descriptors such as "professor," "mother," "father," "never taken part in a protest before" depicted members as a part of mainstream society who happened to find themselves opposing a war due unfortunate circumstances. Very rarely was a member referred to as an activist, and that was not until after the onset of war.

Much of the coverage focused on the human interest element and *personalized* the story (e.g. Bennett, 1988). Frequently a sympathetic story was told about members and their motives for opposing the war because "they more than anyone had the most at stake." The use of personalization was a key element in the legitimation of the group on the Evaluation dimension in that it put a face on the cost of war.

The kinds of indicators included in the Viability dimension made it most difficult to receive legitimacy. An article or program had to do a fairly in-depth treatment of the group to include detailed information on the its resources and goals, and this was not the case most of the time. In an attempt to provide balanced coverage, mainstream opponents of the group were often identified. Public opinion was often mentioned, which after the onset of war it was in opposition to the group's position. These factors in particular helped to undermine the legitimacy of the group on this dimension.

## Treatment of the Anti-War Movement's Character in Print and Television Coverage

Table 2 summarizes the character scores in print coverage of the anti-war movement. Results show mean scores decreasing on every dimension after the war began, with scores not much higher than neutral. Even though tests indicate no statistically significant difference between the before war total average and during war total average, the Normative and Viability dimensions show a pronounced drop from the first period. What accounts for the decline is more reporting of deviant activities such as flag burning, civil disobedience, and arrests. In the days preceding the war, statements were made about the failure of the movement to stop the inevitable, and there was more coverage of pro-war demonstrators and supporters of the war. After the onset of war, there were more negative assertions made about the movement's goals in stopping the war, and much was made of the movement's position being in the minority. All of these factors contributed to an overall decline in these two dimensions.

Table 3 shows the mean scores in television coverage on each character dimension for each of the six time periods. These results indicate that network nightly news coverage on the whole delegitimated the anti-war movement's character especially after the war began. Moreover, with the exception of the period from January 21-28, there was a steady decline in total character scores. There are statistically significant differences between the before war and during war total averages (4.53 vs. 3.43 on the Evaluative dimension and 4.17 vs. 3.23 on total character score).

A summary of the combined coverage of both print and television on the anti-war movement is provided in Table 4. Again, on the Evaluation dimension (4.69 vs. 3.77) and on total character scores (4.51 vs. 3.62) there are statistically significant differences in total mean scores before and after the onset of war. A more detailed description of these results will soon follow. But first some consideration should be given to the difference in print and television coverage of the anti-war movement.

## Differences between Television and Print Coverage of the Anti-War Movement

Two methods of comparing television and print coverage were conducted. First, tests on the mean scores on each dimension revealed that the difference between total character scores in print coverage (4.43) versus television coverage (3.23) during the war were statistically significant (Table 4.) The second method is a comparison of the percentage of stories in print to television that legitimated the movement. Figure 1 shows the percentage of stories with character scores for each dimension above a value of 4; that is, scores within each dimension that legitimated the anti-war movement. This graph illustrates print and television coverage differences before and during the war.

Irrespective of type of medium, the proportion of segments that legitimated within each dimension dropped after the onset of war, and the pattern is the same for all three dimensions. With the exception of the Normative dimension, the percentages are substantially lower in television coverage than print coverage and especially on the Viability dimension. However, the differences in this dimension is partially an artifact of the differences in the media's forms. Nightly network news, because of time constraints, typically cannot provide the amount of in-depth detail that print coverage can. Usually omitted from network news coverage was information in the indicators of Viability. News segments typically gave only the briefest descriptions on the movement's position and how widespread or strong the movement was at any particular time. This was not a problem though in the other two dimensions, hence comparisons there are valid.

## Prominence of Network News Stories that Legitimated vs. Delegitimated the Anti-War Movement

A final comparison illustrates rather dramatically how network coverage changed over the duration of the Gulf conflict. Figure 2 shows the amount of time given to network news stories that legitmated versus those that delegitimated the anti-war movement during four time periods. In the first two periods from August to January 15, the amount of time given to legitimating the movement was considerably higher than the amount of time in stories that delegitimated. But after the onset of war, there was more time spent delegitimating the movement than legitimating it.

Comparing the frequency of coverage of pro-war versus anti-war stories further demonstrates this trend. Beginning on January 15 through March 2, network news did nineteen pro-war, support-the-troops segments for a total of thirty-six minutes. This was nearly double the amount of time devoted to anti-war activities. Moreover, the number of pro-war segments throughout February were two-to-one for anti-war stories. A study by ADT Research corroborates this finding. In that study, statistics compared stories debating the merits of war to stories supporting the troops and their cause. In the three weeks after the onset of war, support-the-troops stories dominated controversy stories thirty-six to nineteen (Dennis, et al, 1991). Coverage debating the merits of war ceased to be as salient in the media's agenda.

### Summary of Character Treatment Differences Between MFSN and the Anti-War Movement

Table 4 summarizes all the character scores thus far and illustrates the differences in character treatment between MFSN and the anti-war movement. Character scores for the anti-war movement are overall lower than MFSN's, and while MFSN scores are fairly stable, the movement's drops after the onset of war. Tests were conducted on the means for combined print and television coverage for each character dimension and total character scores; differences were statistically significant (see Table 4). Total characters scores show that the anti-war movement was marginally legitimated before the war but was not during, while MFSN was legitimated throughout the Gulf conflict.

Figure 3 further illustrates the differences between coverage for MFSN and the anti-war movement. Comparisons are made between the percentage of stories that legitimated on each character dimension before and after the war began. Again, the proportion of stories legitimating the movement are lower than MFSN's on every dimension. On total character scores there is a large decrease in the proportion of stories after the war begins, while for MFSN there is a slight increase.

### Qualitative Diffences between MFSN's and the Anti-War Movement's Coverage

The quantitative analysis in the previous sections is effective in summarizing data in a readily discernable way--it gives us a picture of media treatment in rather broad abstract strokes. But what is missing are some of the nuances and finer details of that picture. What follows is a more detailed examination of typical examples of coverage that illustrate the qualitative differences in treatment between MFSN and the larger movement.

#### A Closer Examination of Coverage that Legitimated MFSN

In the days following the publication of Alex Molnar's open letter to President Bush in the *New York Times,* the media seized the opportunity to spotlight Alex, and in doing so created a legitimate spokesperson of opposition. Here is how NBC *Nightly News* covered the story the day Molnar's letter was published. Molnar was identified as a professor of education and a father of a Marine son deployed to the Gulf. Key phrases evoked a the sympathetic tone in the segment: "like many fathers he was worried, but unlike many he wrote a letter " and "expressed his fears." The letter was described as "touching a lot of parental nerves" as Molnar's phone had not stopped ringing all day, and "most callers agreeing with him." The final statement--"It does not make thoughts of possible danger to a son any easier to accept"--referred to public opinion about the deployment of troops (NBS *Nightly News,* August 23, 1990). The latent message in the segment was that public doubts about the administration's policy in the Gulf were beginning to emerge; and raised doubts about how long public support would hold when people began to realize the price paid for the policy would be American lives. This segment illustrates how the media used Alex Molnar to personify reservations about Gulf policy. He was a perfect symbol. Not only, was he articulate and a part of the establishment, but his personal motives for opposing the policy were legitimate.

An article in the *Los Angeles Times* (November 2, 1990) did one of the more in-depth pieces on the group. MFSN strategically sought to have the group depicted not as veteran peace activists, but as middle American families with something at stake, and we see MFSN's success in negotiating the news frame in the following descriptions of the group: "conservatively dressed and mostly middle-aged men and women," "solid middle Americans," "even their headquarters bespeaks the heartland."

In the *NBC Sunday Today* program aired on January 13, 1991, we see not only legitimation of the group's image but also its position. The program emphasized that MFSN members were not just another member of the anti-war movement but were military parents "proud of the soldiers," whose position of "supporting the troops and opposing the policy [were] not conflicting sentiments."

In the following *Los Angeles Times* (November 25, 1990) article we again see the sympathetic tone in the personalization of a member's circumstances: her husband's "absence is a hardship;" "opposition to her [antiwar] activities is a hardship;" and she tries to "buck up" under the circumstances. This romantic depiction utilizes melodrama and creates actors that are almost heroic as they "buck up" and are "undaunted" in their struggle. Our heroine "festoons her home with yellow ribbons" and "defies her government by going to the Mideast to gain her husband's release." Again, the media found perfect symbols in the drama of opposition. The article made a point of saying that these "unlikely footsoldiers" in this anti-war group were "far from the college students of the Vietnam war." The juxtaposition of symbols here was meaningful and one used often throughout coverage of the group.

## A Closer Examination of Network News Coverage of the Anti-War Movement

What images did the public get from network nightly news about the anti-movement? Taking a closer look at the content from television news coverage exposes certain patterns and frames. In the early coverage of the anti-movement up through the beginning of November 1990, definitions of the movement seemed tenuous. It was a movement that could not easily be labeled because of its diverse constituency. The most dominant were comparisons to the Vietnam anti-war movement, but they were used inconsistently and seemed strained in their appropriateness. Early coverage pointed out that the leaders of this new movement were Vietnam activists: the "old timers," the "familar faces from Vietnam," "from the '60s." Ron Kovic, Daniel Ellsberg, or former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, "Vietnam veteran activists," were mentioned in almost every segment. It was said that the same tactics from the Vietnam era were still being used: teach-ins, demonstrations, and civil disobedience. But in fact the tactics mentioned were as diverse as the groups using them. There seemed to be a need to focus on students as a potential force in the new movement as it was during the Vietnam era. But unlike that era, students were not the main force of the new movement. Still, segment after segment focused on student protesters. A handful of stories acknowledged that this new Gulf war movement, with its broad coalition of groups and interests, was perhaps unlike the Vietnam war movement. Yet comparisons to Vietnam's protest movement persisted.

By trying to force a comparison to the Vietnam era, coverage framed this current anti-war movement as obsolete and predictable. By early November, it was a frame that was less prominent but was still used from time to time and the effect was to undermine the movement's relevance. For example, it was emphasized in one news segment that while this war was very different from Vietnam, and while even some former activists of the 1960s found this war justifiable, the present activists did not see those differences or justifications. The point being, that present peace activists were out of touch, the tactics they used were outdated, and their rationale for opposing the war was "naive."

The anti-war movement throughout November 1990 experienced a period of more favorable news treatment. Several events in the larger environment may have contributed and provided cues for this change. Deployment of troops to the Gulf had doubled in early November. In response, the movement stepped up activities in organizing and mobilizing. Probably the most significant event was the denunciation of war by every church denomination. Another important factor was that powerful establishment critics of the Gulf policy, such as Senators Kerry and Gephart and Admiral Crowe came out openly in opposition to war. Now instead of "old faces," veteran activists were described in network news coverage as "prominent activists of the sixties and seventies." The movement, made up of a "surprising array of critics," was "ever-widening," "mushrooming." Coverage highlighted erroding public support. Here are a few examples of how this the media expressed doubts about a war while legitimating popular dissent: "American's weary of costly military stalemates, costs of Americans dying, uncertainty of intentions, could cause ranks of dissension to grow." "What's cropping up in the military and among Americans is reluctance to go to war for reasons many Americans feel is not worth the sacrifice."

Throughout December there was little coverage of the movement. Then from December 30, 1990 through January 11, 1991 coverage was somewhat mixed. Jackie Judd on ABC's *Nightline* aptly described coverage of the movement during this period as "background noise," which referred to typical depiction of protesters in the background in soundbites of Capitol Hill.

In the two days prior to war, a period of heavy coverage of the movement, there was a significant frame shift. The focus was on public anticipation of the war with anti-war activists being just one of many opinions and the minority opinion. More sources were identified as supporting the war than opposing it. It was reported that only "one out of every four Americans" opposed the beginning of war; whereas some pollsters showed the public was nearly evenly divided (e.g. CBS/*New York Times* Poll, January 1991). The dominant theme was that "antiwar rallies are taking on an edge of desperation" because "demonstrators know they are powerless to stop the war." News segments focused on the most deviant tactics: flag burning, blocking streets and traffic, rioting, civil disobedience, student walk outs, and arrests. Visuals focused on physical confrontations with police, while closeups focused on the distorted faces of angry, shouting protesters.

In one segment, the implicit message was that supporting the troops is patriotic, while dissent is not. Visuals showed flag waving by war veterans and people singing "God Bless America." The final picture was of a candelight vigil with people holding American flags and the incongruent image of a peace sign in the background. Ironically, this was the candlelight vigil organized by MFSN to oppose the war, but was never identified as such. The anti-war movement was already being marginalized in network news coverage even before the war began.

The trend towards marginalization and polarization continued. In the few weeks just after the onset of war, the larger story was about the war itself and secondary was public reaction to it. Rare was coverage featuring the movement. Instead the movement was depicted as the muted voice of opposition in large segments featuring public support. These segments focused on the "proud of America " and "war fever" sentiment in the larger public. It was reported that "scattered protests are now the exception and not the rule." Not only were anti-war demonstrators marginalized in prominence but also in character. One segment showed how the "small antiwar demonstration was devoured by those in support of the war." Segments focused more on confrontations between pro-war and anti-war factions, but pro-war demonstrators now took center stage.

Supporting the troops became synonomous with supporting the war in news coverage, and the underlying message was that protesting the war was unpatriotic and does not support the troops. Coverage spotlighted pro-war supporters, referring to themselves as the "silent majority" who were no longer silent and who denounced opposition to war as hurting the troops. In several segments, we were reminded of how Vietnam protesters scorned the warriors and as well as the war, and how anti-war protest "now is a sign to some that our troops may not be given a hero's welcome home." This story frame dominated the coverage in the weeks after the war began, with one exception. In a story on ABC *Nightly News* aired in early February, the message was that protest is not unpatriotic and the right to dissent is democratic principle to be valued.

The only network news segment after the war on the anti-war movement seems appropriate as a postscript. It included a soundbite of President Bush saying,"There [was]n't any anti-war movement out there." It concluded that "peace marchers [were] out of step with the rest of the country" and according to one source, "the anti-war movement did not represent mainstream American thought and was wrong."

## Distinctions in Coverage Between MFSN and the Anti-War Movement Were Overt

Distinctions in the coverage between MFSN and the larger anti-war movement were even more explicit in stories that included both. In stories that featured both, MFSN was distinguished from the larger movement, and in some instances the distinctions served to legitimate MFSN while delegitimating the movement. Distinctions were made through labeling and differences in ideology. MFSN was "not an anti-war group, not a peace group;" members were "not pacifists or anti-interventionists, but parents" of soldiers in the gulf. Distinctions were also made between the group's and the larger movement's strategies. MFSN members did not "join peace coalitions" and did not encourage "conscientious objectors." MFSN members were "people who preferred to work through the political process than demonstrate on the streets." MFSN was among "the current crop of dissenters not limited to the usual suspects," but very different from the "recycled radicals" of the anti-war movement. Finally, distinctions were also made about perceived public support. While MFSN was "deluged with calls " from those that agreed with their position, the "general public [was] not responding to the old faces" of the movement. MFSN brought some new faces to an "old movement" that the press could respond to and accord legitimacy.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The differences in media coverage between the anti-war group MFSN and the larger movement support the hypothesis that because of inherent and perceived differences between the two, the former would be legitimated while the latter not. This also specifies conditions under which the media are more likely to act as agents social control. That is, not all groups will be treated equally, and groups who are perceived as being closer to the mainstream in their values, views and composition will be legitimated by the media than groups who are not. As such MFSN was probably perceived as being closer to the mainstream by the media because that was how it was portrayed. As for the anti-war movement, while there was considerable variance in media treatment across individual stories, on the whole, the anti-war movement was not accorded the same degree of legitimacy as the group.

A few questions are unresolved, however. Why was MFSN still accorded legitimacy by the media after the onset of war when its opposition was a minority view? Moreover, why did favorable treatment of this group continue when coverage marginalized the larger movement? There are no obvious answers. Perhaps continued favorable coverage can be attributed to the MFSN's success in controlling how it was depicted. Perhaps treatment of the group had less to do with its influence and more to do with how it was perceived. Perhaps the group never perceived as a serious threat to the status quo? After all, the group's grievance was against this particular war and not against the social order.

How then did the media act as agents of social control in response to the anti-war movement? At first coverage was restrained and somewhat negative until November when the movement's opposition was legitimated by establishment elites. During a period of intensified public debate over the merits of war, the anti-war movement was for a brief time portrayed as a legitimate political contender. However, after the onset war, when public consensus was in support, the debate in news discourse nearly ceased. The anti-war movement was marginalized by portraying it in opposition to public consensus. The media perhaps unwittingly suppressed full expression of opposing views, and thereby, inadvertently supported the status quo.

Gitlin (1980: 292) says the "crucial unintended effect" of media coverage of social movements is to "undermine whatever efforts movements may make to present a general coherent political opposition." This may have been the case for this movement. In that brief period prior to war, the story of interest was the opposition. We got a sense of who the opposition was. They had faces and names. Some were ordinary people, waitresses and fathers of soldiers. We heard more than just a single grievance. We heard various arguments for opposing a war, arguments that reflected a range of interests and concerns. But after the onset of war, the image of the movement, especially in nightly news, was distilled down to some small featureless single voice of grievance. Absent was a picture of any coherent opposition.

## ENDNOTES

[1] Information on the background of the anti-war movement came from articles in alternative press sources *In These Times* and *The Nation,* which are cited under references.

[2] The sources used for the background on MFSN were from several articles from *In These Times, Mother Jones* and *The Nation* and from an interview with University Wisconsin-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communication professor Lew Friedland, who has done an extensive investigation of the group.

# APPENDIX

## Legitimacy of AntiWar Movement

1. What is the article or program ID number__ __ __

2. If print, what is the name of article and publication______________________________
If television, the name of program______________________________

3. Date of article or program__ __/__ __/__ __

4. Context: What is the article or program about__________________________________

Visibility & Prominence

For Articles:

5. How large is the circulation of newspaper?
____3= large ____2= medium ____1= small

6. Article position within newspaper:
____3= front pg. of first section
____2= front pg of another section
____1= another location

7. If 3 on #7. above:
-how many words are in newspaper article________
-how many pages are in magazine article_________

8. What groups or antiwar activists are mentioned_______________________________
_________________________________________________________________

For Television:

9. Time of day show is aired:_______________
____Weekday ____Weekend

10. How much time (in min.& sec.) is devoted exclusively to the antiwar group within the segment/program__________

11. What groups or antiwar activists are mentioned______________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Evaluation

12. -Is there a human interest element in descriptions about members; do we get a sense of the individuals involved and their motives _____yes ____no
-How would you rate the treatment of this element:
critical ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 sympathetic

14. What are the phrases which refer to an attribute of a group, a member, a possession, or its actions (e.g. "his ideology," "their dangerous accomplices," "stormed the capital")
Phrase______________________
negative ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 positive
Phrase______________________
negative ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 positive
Phrase______________________
negative ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 positive
Phrase______________________
negative ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 positive
Total number of assertions:______

13. What nouns & adjectives are used to describe the protesters/ groups (e.g. voices of dissent)
Noun/adjective________________
negative ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 positive
Noun/adjective________________
negative ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 positive
Noun/adjective________________
negative ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 positive
Noun/adjective________________
negative ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 positive
Noun/adjective________________
negative ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 positive
Noun/adjective________________
negative ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 positive
Total number of assertions:______

15. Based on the information in, what is the groups'/protesters' status relative to the mainstream?
Group or activist:________________________
deviant activist ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 mainstream opponent
Group or activist:________________________
deviant activist ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 mainstream opponent
Group or activist:________________________
deviant activist ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 mainstream opponent
Group or activist:________________________
deviant activist ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 mainstream opponent
Group or activist:________________________
deviant activist ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 mainstream opponent
Group or activist:________________________
deviant activist ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 mainstream opponent
Total number of assertions:______

16. Statements made about this group being different from Vietnam antiwar movement:
________________________________________________________________________

Normative Actions

17. List and evaluate past & present actions or tactics mentioned according mainstream norms:
Action ________________________
deviant ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 normative
(e.g. terrorist, destruction of property lives to praying or writing congressman)
Action ________________________
deviant ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 normative
Action ________________________
deviant ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 normative
Action ________________________
deviant ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 normative

18. If arrests are mentioned, are reasons given?____yes____no

19. If symbolic gestures are made by protesters (i.e. burning flags, civil disobedience), is a rationale provided? ____yes____no

Viability (Substance and Potency)
The Rationale:
23. Does the group state it's position? or Does the group have an organized point of view that is noted by journalist? _____yes ____no

24. Are the group's goals mentioned? _____yes ____no

25. Is the group's rationale behind its positions or goals discussed? _____yes ____no

26. Are any evaluative assertions made about the reasonableness of either the group's position or goals?
assertion________________________________________
negative ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 positive

20. Identify statements about the movement's resources:
a. the movements' political and communication skill level________________
________________________________________
b. how organized or efficient is movement______________________________
c. how widespread and developed are its networks___________________
e. how much access group has to decision makers (i.e. government, establishment media, unions)________________________________________
f. how large is membership & is it growing____________________________
Based on the above assertions re: resources, how limited or ample are they portrayed:
none ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 extremely resourceful

21. What opponents of the movement are mentioned in article or program.
Rate each one based on the opponents status relative to the mainstream?
Opponent__________________
extreme right ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 mainstream
Opponent__________________
extreme right ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 mainstream
Opponent__________________
extreme right ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 mainstream

28. What other allies are mentioned in article or program.
Rate each one based on the ally's status relative to the mainstream?
Ally__________________
radical activist ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 mainstream opponent
Ally__________________
radical activist ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 mainstream opponent
Ally__________________
radical activist ___-3 ___-2 ___-1___ 0 ___1 ___2 ___3 mainstream opponent

22. Is a statement made about public opinion:
-with regard to the war, intervention
____ increasingly prowar, protroop
____ increasingly antiwar

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## TABLE 1

Means for Indicators of CHARACTER for MFSN in Print Coverage

| Time Period | Evaluation | Normative | Viability | Total Character |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oct. 31-Nov. 26 | 6.12 N=14 | 6.81 N=14 | 5.97 N=14 | 6.31 |
| Dec. 12-Jan. 5 | 5.99 N=5 | 6.93 N=4 | 6.20 N=5 | 6.28 |
| Jan. 11-15 | 5.86 N=11 | 6.86 N=11 | 4.52 N=10 | 5.82 |
| *Before War Totals: | 6.00 N=30<br>(0.88) | 6.84 N=29<br>(0.43) | 5.51 N=29<br>(1.12) | 6.13<br>(0.63) |
| Jan. 17-28 | 6.26 N=5 | 6.06 N=5 | 5.20 N=5 | 5.84 |
| Feb. 2- 23 | 5.87 N=9 | 6.83 N=7 | 5.19 N=8 | 5.84 |
| *During War Totals: | 6.00 N=14<br>(0.77) | 6.51 N=12<br>(1.15) | 5.19 N=13<br>(1.04) | 5.84<br>(0.64) |
| *Post War Totals:<br>March-April | 5.98 N=6<br>(0.77) | 6.75 N=4<br>(0.50) | 6.33 N=6<br>(0.82) | 6.27<br>(0.64) |
| TOTAL: | 6.00 N=50 | 6.72 N=45 | 5.53 N=48 | 6.06 |

Note: N= number of articles; standard deviations are in parentheses.

-Scales range from 1.00 to 7.00. A score of 4.00 is neutral. The higher the score, the more viable, normative, or favorable the evaluation.

*T-Tests on the difference between the means on each dimension before, during and after the war were not statistically significant.

TABLE 2

Means for Indicators of CHARACTER for Anti-War Movement in Print Coverage

| Time Period | Evaluation | Normative | Viability | Total Character |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sept. 29-Jan. 13 | 4.83 N=10 | 5.25 N=10 | 5.60 N=10 | 5.24 |
| Jan. 14-15 | 5.08 N=8 | 4.19 N=8 | 4.52 N=8 | 4.55 |
| *Before War Totals: | 4.89 N=18<br>(0.87) | 4.78 N=18<br>(1.60) | 5.12 N=18<br>(1.55) | 4.93<br>(1.12) |
| *During War Totals:<br>Jan. 17- Feb.26 | 4.38 N=9<br>(1.49) | 4.40 N=8<br>(1.77) | 4.44 N=9<br>(1.54) | 4.43<br>(1.50) |
| TOTAL: | 4.75 N=27 | 4.66 N=26 | 4.89 N=27 | 4.77 |

Note: N= number of articles; standard deviations are in parentheses.

*T-Tests on the difference between the means on each dimension before, during and after the war are not statistically significant.

TABLE 3

Means for Indicators of CHARACTER for the Anti-War Movement in Television Coverage

| Time Period | Evaluation | Normative | Viability | Total Character |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sept. 30-Dec. 8 | 4.70 N=10 | 4.93 N=10 | 4.75 N=10 | 4.78 |
| Dec. 30-Jan. 13 | 4.46 N=5 | 4.18 N=5 | 3.10 N=5 | 3.92 |
| Jan. 14-15 | 4.33 N=7 | 3.40 N=7 | 2.71 N=7 | 3.47 |
| Before War Totals: | 4.53 N=22<br>(1.06) | 4.27 N=22<br>(1.70) | 3.73 N=22<br>(2.09) | 4.17<br>(1.43) |
| Jan. 17-19 | 2.98 N=6 | 3.08 N=5 | 2.92 N=6 | 2.88 |
| Jan. 21-28 | 4.41 N=5 | 4.50 N=5 | 3.82 N=5 | 3.88 |
| Feb. 7-March 2 | 3.00 N=5 | 3.52 N=5 | 2.75 N=4 | 2.98 |
| During War Totals: | 3.43 N=16<br>(1.83) | 3.70 N=15<br>(1.85) | 3.18 N=15<br>(1.87) | 3.23<br>(1.61) |
| TOTAL: | 4.07 N=36 | 4.04 N=37 | 3.50 N=37 | 3.77 |

Difference Between Total Coverage Means Before and During War

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Before War Totals: | 4.53 | 4.27 | 3.73 | 4.17 |
| During War Totals: | 3.43** | 3.70 | 3.18 | 3.23* |

Differences between total coverage means before and during the war are statistically significant at (** p<.01; *p<.05; t-test).

TABLE 4

Means for Indicators of CHARACTER for MFSN and the Anti-War Movement

| | | Evaluation | Normative | Viability | Total Character |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TV Coverage of Anti-War Movement | Before War: | 4.53 | 4.27 | 3.73 | 4.17 |
| | During War: | 3.43 | 3.70 | 3.18 | 3.23 |
| | Total: | 4.07 | 4.04 | 3.50 | 3.77 |
| Print Coverage of Anti-War Movement | Before War: | 4.89 | 4.78 | 5.11 | 4.93 |
| | During War: | 4.37 | 4.40 | 4.44 | 4.43 |
| | Total: | 4.75 | 4.66 | 4.89 | 4.77 |
| Combined Coverage | Before War: | 4.69 | 4.58 | 4.35 | 4.51 N=40 |
| | | (0.98) | (1.29) | (1.97) | (1.34) |
| | During War: | 3.77 | 3.94 | 3.65 | 3.62 N=25 |
| | | (1.74) | (1.82) | (2.07) | (1.63) |
| TV Coverage of MFSN | Before War: | 6.42 | 7.00 | 5.65 | 6.33 |
| | During War: | 5.38 | 7.00 | 5.95 | 6.15 |
| | Total: | 6.28 | 7.00 | 5.69 | 6.31 |
| Print Coverage of MFSN | Before War: | 6.00 | 6.84 | 5.51 | 6.13 |
| | During War: | 6.00 | 6.57 | 5.55 | 5.97 |
| | Total: | 6.00 | 6.72 | 5.53 | 6.06 |
| Combined Coverage | Before War: | 6.13 | 6.89 | 5.55 | 6.19 N=43 |
| | | (0.82) | (0.37) | (1.20) | (0.61) |
| | During War: | 5.94 | 6.62 | 5.59 | 5.99 N=22 |
| | | (0.76) | (0.97) | (1.10) | (0.63) |

Difference Between MFSN & Anti-War Movement Combined Coverage Means

| Combined Coverage: | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MFSN vs. | Before War: | 6.13 | 6.89 | 5.55 | 6.19 |
| Anti-War[1] | Before War: | 4.69** | 4.58** | 4.35** | 4.51** |
| MFSN vs. | During War: | 5.94 | 6.62 | 5.59 | 5.99 |
| Anti-War[2] | During War: | 3.77** | 3.94** | 3.65** | 3.62** |

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[1] Differences between MFSN and Anti-War movement coverage before war are statistically significant at (** p<.01; t-test).

[2] Differences between MFSN and Anti-War movement coverage during war are statistically significant at (** p<.01; t-test).

## Figure 1

% of News Stories that Legitimate on Each Character Dimension Anti-War Movement

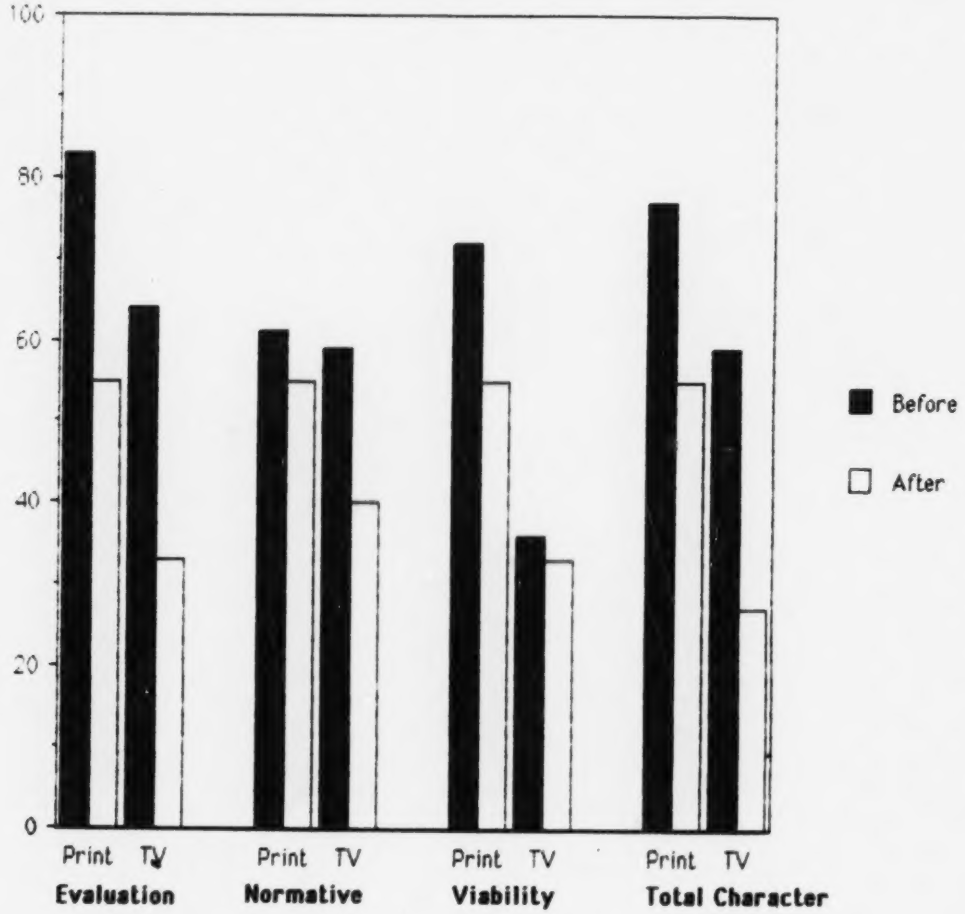


Figure 2

Time of Network News that Legitimated vs. Delegitimated Anti-War Movement

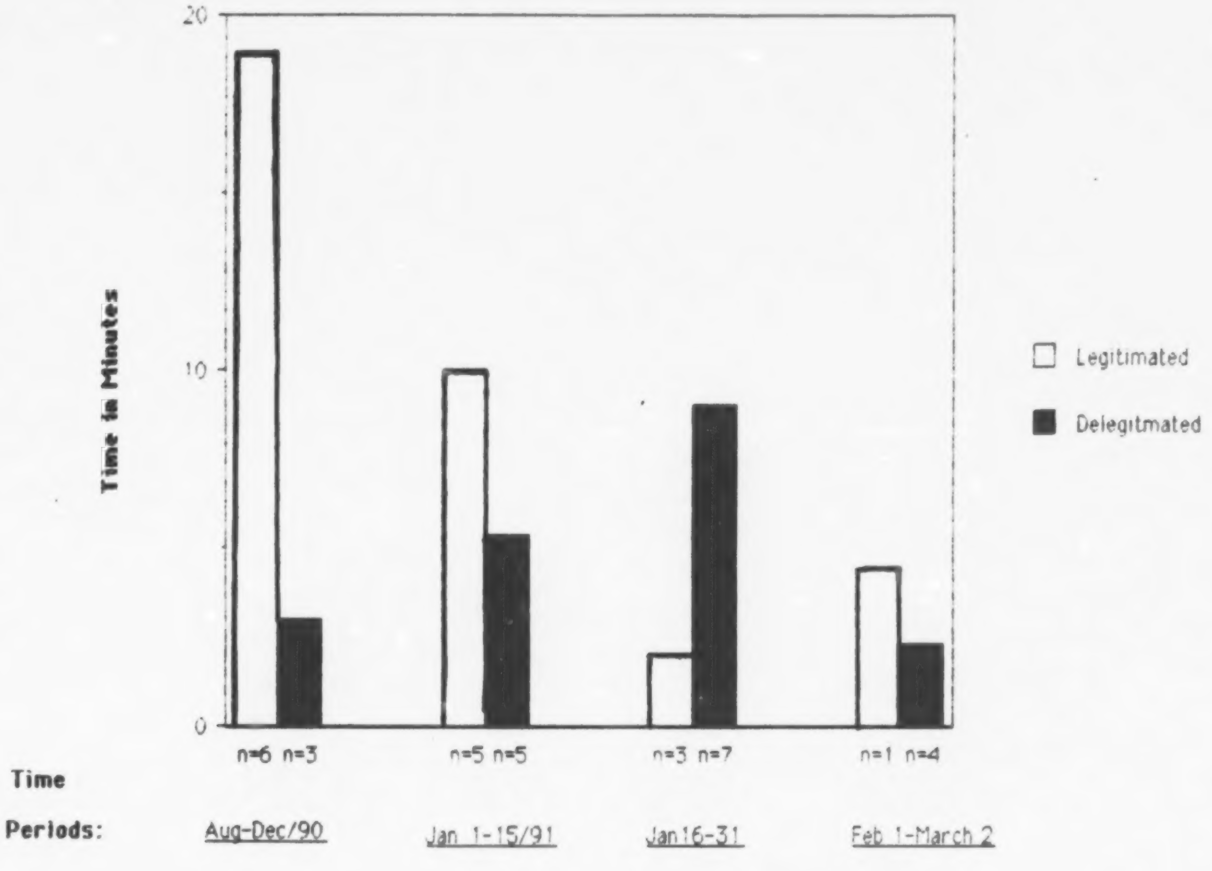
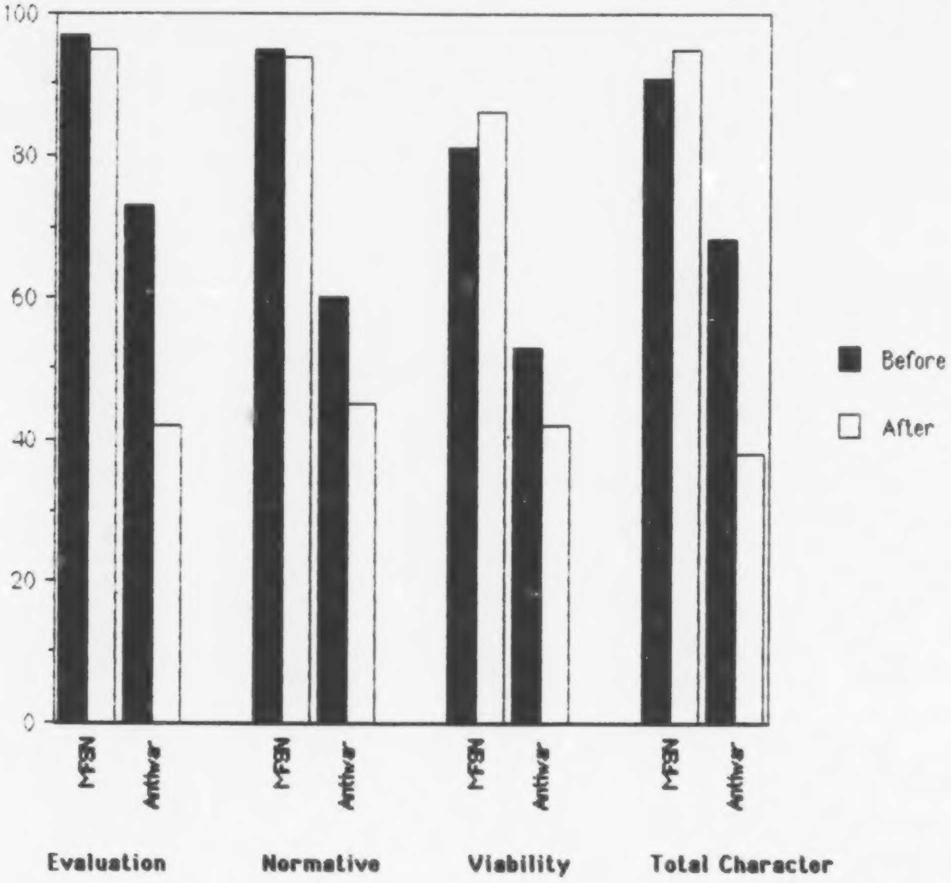


Figure 3

% of News Stories that Legitimate Anti-War Movement vs. MFSN



# CONSTRUCTING NEWS NARRATIVES: ABC AND CNN COVER THE GULF WAR

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## ABSTRACT

CNN's Persian Gulf War coverage renewed debate about media bias, the manipulation of television news by political adversaries, and the potentially adverse effects of television news on public understanding of foreign crisis. Although researchers have examined CNN's technical advantages and live broadcasts, scant attention has been given to the format constraints operating in CNN newscasts. This close textual analysis assesses the degree to which CNN's *Headline News* differed from the top-rated evening newscast, ABC's *World News Tonight*. Drawing from research on news framing, narrative analysis, and viewer comprehension of news, ABC and CNN newscasts were examined for their reliance on sequential and hermeneutic codes. The analysis demonstrates that both ABC and CNN used speculations, scenarios, and enigmatic frames that priveleged military intervention and advanced a quest narrative for interpreting the gulf conflict. The paper concludes that CNN's advancements in technology and speed of reporting have not significantly affected the packaging of news, as CNN has adopted the structural frames established by television networks. The narrative conventions identified here are likely to increase audience interest in and comprehension of news while implicitly supporting U.S. military intervention.

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# CONSTRUCTING NEWS NARRATIVES:
# ABC AND CNN COVER THE GULF WAR

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As President Bush proclaimed the coming of a "new world order" during the Persian Gulf War, media critics heralded a new world order of instant reporting. The continuous live reports provided by the Cable News Network (CNN) prompted some observers to call the conflict "The CNN War" (Laurence 1991). Academics called the Gulf War a "critical incident" for television journalism (Zelizer 1992) because of the challenge CNN posed to the networks (ABC, CBS, NBC). But with the praise and legitimacy conferred to CNN came ample criticism. The charges levied against CNN, and television news in general, included questions about media bias, the perceived inadequacy of information due to news management by the military, the manipulation of television news by political adversaries, and the potentially adverse effects of television news on public understanding of political events.

The attention given to CNN suggests that its role in television journalism may go beyond providing the latest news during major crises. CNN has sought to expand its audience during periods of calm by making its evening newscasts a point of reference beyond opinion leaders (Waldman 1989). But these evening newscasts have eluded researchers who concentrate on CNN's live coverage or technological advantages (Walker, Wicks, & Pyle 1991). An examination of CNN's Headline News reveals the extent to which conventions of television news presentation constrain CNN's packaging of events in ways similar to the three broadcast networks. Television news is known for relying on dramatic visual presentations, attempting to captivate viewers, condensing information into brief segments, and emphasizing immediate and technologically sophisticated coverage. Much contemporary research identifies these constraints without assessing how they shape the telling of news stories. Television news formats shape the way news stories are told and the kinds of interpretations people make about those stories. Detailed analysis of the formats in television news can help explain public understanding of foreign conflicts and identify the kinds of policies viewers are likely to support (Altheide 1991, Dobkin 1992b).

Prior research has suggested that news formats among the networks -- ABC, CBS, and NBC -- are consistent. Although reporting styles may vary (Nimmo & Combs, 1985), the three networks place similar emphasis on topic selection, use many of the same sources, devote comparable time to victims or families affected by crisis, and show the same video footage (Atwater 1989, Elliott 1988). CNN may not follow the same conventions: CNN's status as an international news service, with live reports and journalists behind enemy lines, has raised questions about its uniqueness. A central objective of this analysis is to assess the degree to which CNN newscasts differ from those of the other networks.

A second concern raised by television coverage of the Gulf War underlies this comparison of newscasts. Given the tendency of television news to decontextualize events, media critics often point to background reports as an antidote. Background reports in television news can offer journalistic freedom, provide much-needed context to events, and potentially counter the news management efforts of public and military officials. These background reports provide viewers with an interpretive framework by which they may understand ongoing events (Dobkin 1992a, Lewis 1985). Background reports, or reporter packages, also constitute a primary site of analysis in the newscasts. Attention to CNN's live coverage precludes an examination of reporter packages such as those in Headline News. As Walker et al. (1991) note in their study of CNN's live coverage during the Gulf War, CNN presented accounts of action taking place without much simultaneous analysis. Viewers can find this contextual apparatus in the reporter packages that come before, during, and after cutaways to live events. Since these packages are consolidated each night in CNN's 30 minute newscast, Headline News, data from Headline News was used for this analysis.

ABC's World News Tonight was chosen as a base of comparison for the 30 minute format of Headline News. ABC News has consistently received top ratings among the networks, and during the Persian Gulf War, ABC's anchor, Peter Jennings, was designated the most credible anchor by television viewers (Morin 1991). The volume of television news coverage given to the war also necessitates careful selection of data. Although the war was relatively short, key events punctuated the war and can be isolated with attention concentrated on those periods. The dates of coverage used here include ABC and CNN coverage between January 14 and March 1, but attention has been focused on the days immediately preceding the allied air attacks and ground offensive: January 14 and 15, and February 22, 1991. These dates represent pivotal points in the escalation of conflict and could be expected to contain an abbreviated form of the news conventions that preceeded those dates. Television news began providing interpretive reports on U.S. military involvement in the Persian Gulf as early as August, 1990, but by the final days before allied military intervention the narrative frame for interpreting impending events had become a standard feature of the newscasts. Understanding the nature and implication of this frame constitutes one means by which an assessment of CNN's contribution to coverage of the Gulf War can be made.

## NEWS NARRATIVES AS STRUCTURAL FRAMES

Several researchers have noted journalists' reliance on frames, or interpretive categories, to handle the flow of news events (Gitlin 1980, Gamson 1989, Tuchman 1978). While the concept of news frames has been popular, the term remains somewhat ambiguous in its application to television news. As Tankard et al. lament in their explication of the construct, "with some authors, the determination of what frames are being used in news stories about a certain event or situation seems to be done essentially by authority or by fiat" (Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem 1991:1). They identify a list of prominent themes that serve as defining frames for interpreting a domain of news content. A thematic approach to news frames gives researchers a conceptual starting point, as frames certainly function as organizing principles and set limits of discussion. These broad thematic categories, though, do little to refine and advance our understanding of news frames. I have argued elsewhere (1991, 1992b) that news frames operate at two levels: first, semantic frames provide definitions, orientations, initial perceptions, or commonly accepted values by which the journalist apprehends an event; second, structural frames provide the formal conventions, or story forms, by which news is presented. These two levels of frames guide the explanations and contexts provided by journalists and constitute a standard format feature of television news.

Analysis of structural frames is critical to understanding the interpretations of news events that journalists advance. Through frames, journalists help define the political order and provide a field of reference for talking about events. Individual events or characterizations make sense within the logic of these frames and thus constrain interpretations to those within the frames:

> The articulation of individual signs . . . has a widereaching effect on a culture's understanding of a situation and the array of meanings and possible course of action which may be taken in the situation. Alternative descriptions of the situation thus tend to be systematically eliminated from the common sense understanding of what a problem is about. (Makus 1990:504)

Journalists can establish or legitimize a situational logic for interpreting events, which gives them the power to define political order (Cook 1991).

The power of news organizations to frame political events is mediated by both the demands of public and political audiences and the economic imperative of news organizations. In summarizing research on audience comprehension of television news, Lewis (1991) argues that the structure of television news disengages audiences because it does not abide by the narrative structure of fictional programming. Although Lewis argues that television news stories are structured "like newspaper stories with moving pictures" (1991:130), this analysis demonstrates television journalism's much closer adherence to the fictional codes of narrative. Two types of narrative codes, sequential and hermeneutic, characterize structural news frames. An explication of these codes identifies the frames most likely to meet audience demands and economic imperatives. The evaluation of CNN and ABC thus depends, in part, on the degree to which they adopt these frames.

The code of sequence, according to Lewis (1991), refers to a logic of appearances ordered by a theme or the passage of time. Although newscasts rarely proceed in chronological order, in the case of the Persian Gulf War, events were marked by time rather than territory (Der Derian 1991), lending substantial significance to governmental deadlines and ultimatums as ordering features of the newscasts. Further, in the serial news of continuing war coverage, scenes were more likely to be linked by ideas or themes rather than loosely associated by the transitions of anchors or reporters. The deadlines of January 16 and February 23 suggested a logic of impending conflict that prompted ABC News to spend 60-70% of its time on Gulf-related stories, with CNN Headline News following close behind. Since time spent on a topic does not guarantee a sequential code, Lewis stresses the relevance of story development in the sequence. Here lies the importance of the hermeneutic code, "the glue that fixes us to the screen, the device that tempts, teases, and rewards those of us who keep on watching" (Lewis 1991:126). The hermeneutic code suggests a narrative structure by which news stories are told and interpreted.

The hermeneutic code consists of three stages: the enigma, which arouses audience curiosity by presenting a question or mystery; suspension of the enigma, in which resolutions are suggested and tensions heightened; and resolution of the enigma or temporary satisfaction. Lewis (1991) contends that this hermeneutic code is present in popular television programming such as sports, quiz shows, soap operas, and advertisements, but is absent from television news. Although his analysis may hold true for many routine television news stories, the political and economic pressures shaping television journalism suggest that this enigmatic code may be apparent in news coverage of political crisis, particularly foreign ones. Journalists tend to report foreign policy initiatives uncritically and accept official storylines out of deference to policymakers and lack of information (Dorman & Farhang 1987). Additionally, television news storylines are likely to follow the structure of the romantic quest, a "universal structure" that "gives meaning to political practices and rituals" and which is "most evident in crisis situations or when attention is focused on the most exalted of political officers" (McGee 1985:156-160). The romantic quest is a narrative structure that quickly establishes conflict and identifies a protagonist who, with the aid of a few supporting characters, takes action to resolve the conflict. This narrative structure meets both the political needs of high government officials who desire public support and attention and the economic needs of news organizations. Journalists cast presidents as heroes because "such dramatic and romantic themes attract larger audiences and thus maximize profits" (McGee 1985:145).

The political expedience of using a quest narrative to frame the Persian Gulf War was recognized long before the first allied air attacks. As Mann wrote:

> Like other media stars, a successful politician seeks to play the leading role in a human drama with which the voters/viewers can psychologically identify. The gulf crisis provided President Bush with an obvious dramatic opportunity.
>
> Sophisticated politicians have long recognized that for purposes of psychological participation, traditional scenarios of good versus evil are highly effective, and Saddam Hussein was the perfect villain. (1990:178)

The public reception of U.S. military intervention in the Persian Gulf depended partly on the degree to which this narrative frame was reproduced in television news coverage of the conflict.

Structural frames can reveal much about the interpretations of political crises that television news suggests to its viewers. Analysis of these frames requires attention to both introductions and transitions, or the code of sequence, and more fundamentally the hermeneutic code -- or lack of one -- evident in reporter packages and background reports. Such an inquiry can illuminate CNN and ABC's relative roles in building public support for U.S. military intervention in the Persian Gulf.

## THE POLITICS OF SPECULATION

At the beginning of every newscast, anchors give an introduction that establishes the topic or question to lead the evenings news. Anchor introductions indicate the relative importance of news items and provide the terms or logic that will structure the forthcoming stories. During the week before the first allied air strikes, and arguably for months prior to January 16, 1991, television news had been framed by the enigma, "Will the U.S. go to war with Iraq?" Variations on this theme included emphasis on the movement of time toward the United Nations deadline for Iraq's withdrawal from

Kuwait. For instance, on January 15, Peter Jennings opened the ABC newscast: "Good evening. There is a fateful moment where one must act. This moment has, alas, arrived." Similarly, but perhaps with less drama, CNN's Lynne Russell began: "Time is running out, and there is no sign of compromise." The day before the start of the allied ground offensive, Jennings specifically told viewers to mark time. He introduced the newscast with the instructions: "Remember the date and the time. Saturday, February the 23rd, at twelve o'clock noon, Eastern time" (February 22, 1991). As one researcher has commented, this "may have been our first war by appointment" (Small 1992:3). These statements provided a chronological code of sequence, indicated the inevitability of allied involvement, and set the stage for reports on war preparations and scenarios of war strategies.

The emphasis on deadlines and ultimatums is a predictable development in newscasts that operate on the narrative logic posed by enigmas. This structure leads viewers to expect the emotional satisfaction found in traditional narratives. As Lewis puts it, the enigma left unresolved is "a source of frustration and disappointment" (1991:127). Background reports of troops in the Gulf training and waiting can build viewer frustration with the stalled narrative. One soldier identified this tension during the January 14, ABC News broadcast: "Ever since we've had this January deadline, line drawn in the sand, whatever you want to call it, our edge has been building as we get closer and closer to that date." Jim Hickey interviewed a pilot who, "like so many others have said so many times, is tired of waiting" (ABC, January 15, 1991). Continual speculation about military involvement created a sense of urgency, because "the clock is ticking," "tensions [are] building," and American troops "simply want to get on with the job" (ABC, January 14, 1991). Consistent portrayals of troop inaction threatened the movement of the narrative toward resolution.

The expectation of action was also bolstered by frequent speculations and scenarios about the probable course of warfare. With the "deadline for Iraq to leave Kuwait" only "two and a half hours away, the preparations for war" looked "ominous." (CNN, January 14, 1991). Both ABC and CNN gave detailed accounts of troop movements and combat readiness. For instance, Jennings told viewers: "The U.S. Navy has now moved two of its aircraft carriers in the region into the Persian Gulf itself so their planes are closer to targets in Iraq" (January 15, 1991). CNN confirmed "the Pentagon is moving about 20 B-52 bombers in an unnamed country closer to Iraq" (January 15, 1991). Given identifiable movement toward military action, negotiations were framed as outside the logic of the enigma. Correspondent Brit Hume seemed to recognize the force of this logic when he reported that the Administration "has long been afraid of being drawn into some negotiating process in which it would never be able to get the outright victory and triumph in all of this . . . that it believes is necessary and available" (ABC, February 22, 1991). CNN quoted British Prime Minister John Major echoing similar sentiments, as the "allied leaders won't be strung along by insincere negotiations" (February 22, 1991).

The "will we fight?" enigma posed war as imminent, so speculation about how the fighting might develop seemed natural. Some researchers have relegated speculation to a form of description rather than analysis (Walker et al. 1991), but suggesting possible courses of action and building scenarios establishes the assumptions by which events can be interpreted. Television newscasts suggested that the challenge for the U.S. was not primarily how to achieve peace, but how best to make war. Jennings stated: "As the deadline approaches, two challenges for the U.S. -- to fight again with a generation of American troops, the vast majority of whom have never been in combat, and to fight with a new generation of American weapons which have never been tested in battle" (January 15, 1991). With the answer to "will we fight" as an implied "yes," the logical extension became "who will win?"

Television newscasts answered that question through ample scenarios that showcased American troops and technology. ABC has long relied on background reports that detail American military might; for example, throughout the 1980s ABC used simulations, Defense Department file footage, and scenes from popular movies to depict possible U.S. military responses to international terrorism (Dobkin 1992). Military scenarios were a standard feature of ABC News during Persian Gulf War coverage as well. As ABC's Bob Zelnick reported over file footage of missile launches and explosions:

> Tomahawk cruise missiles like these could be among the first weapons to be launched against Iraq. Navy sources say the U.S. has about 500 of the missiles aboard surface ships and submarines in the Gulf area. They would be launched against Iraqi command centers, air bases, fuel depots, and chemical weapons facilities . . . . Just as in the 1986 raid on Libya, the key early mission for U.S. aircraft will be to destroy Iraqi planes and surface-to-air missile batteries . . . only after the U.S. has achieved command of the skies would B-52 and FB-11 bombers begin to hit entrenched Iraqi ground forces. (January 14, 1991)

Lengthy scenarios such as this one primed viewers to accept a military frame for understanding foreign conflict, one which also privileged the antiseptic bombing footage to come later during the war.

Although CNN followed similar conventions in providing scenarios of military action, the news organization reflected its international orientation by offering scenarios that highlighted allied military forces. For example, CNN's Richard Blystone built this scenario of Israel's possible response to an Iraqi assault:

> A hilltop overlooking a Jordan valley. American-made HOG anti-aircraft missiles practice a deadly minuet. Israel is showing off one of the reasons it says an Iraqi mission over here would be a one-way trip . . . . If Israel decides the results of an Iraqi strike require retaliation, it will strike back . . . The (Iraqi) Sukors and their escorts would come up against Israel's fighters and interceptors . . . . Israel has been readying two batteries of Patriot ground-to-air missiles, offspring of the Star Wars program, developed with the United States. (January 15, 1991)

CNN was less detailed in its predictions, using fewer graphics and limited military file footage. Blystone presented the Israeli scenario with frequent references to U.S. participation and equipment, but the American influence was less pronounced in CNN's newscasts than in ABC's reports and commentary. When Jennings asked correspondent Dean Reynolds if Israelis "sense that one of their most deeply felt adversaries is about to get it," Reynolds replied, "Behind all of the apprehension is a certain amount of satisfaction that the man they wanted to see go away is going to go away at the hands of the United States" (January 15, 1991). These comments were made after detailing Israeli preparations for attack, and they indicate the different emphases in ABC and CNN scenarios.

Both ABC and CNN had to temper confidence in U.S. military superiority with a note of apprehension for the enigma to remain suspended. For instance, ABC's reporters noted that the "Patriots have never been to war," but military officials remained confident; the Apache attack helicopter was "yet to be tested" but called "fit to fly," and "capable of showing the taxpayer[s] they got their money's worth" (ABC January 15, 1991). Despite potential problems, Jennings said, there was "a lot of talk about kicking the butt of the enemy with great ease" (January 15, 1991). The progression from "will we fight?" to "who will win?" and "how will the war develop?" simulated the enigmatic structure apparent in televised sports (Lewis 1991). In fact, in adopting a narrative frame that replicated the hermeneutic code of sports, television news added force to the ubiquitous sports metaphors and analogies that permeated Persian Gulf coverage. Rather than providing contextual knowledge or analysis by which to evaluate U.S. policy in the Gulf, ABC and CNN used their background reports in a manner that implicitly supported U.S. military intervention. Even when CNN attempted to provide historical analysis for military intervention, explanation came in the form of comparisons to American military strategy in the Civil War and World War I (February 22, 1991). Lewis explains the significance of background reports in providing a frame for audience interpretation:

> What is also particular about television news is that, unlike many other forms of television, it operates on a discursive level that most people find elusive . . . . the frameworks respondents used to make sense of a news item frequently originated from the news itself. (1991:143)

Television news, particularly when reporting about foreign events, operated as a closed system, reinforcing its own presuppositions and frames. "Will we fight/will we win" became a common sense enigmatic code for television news and was supported by speculations and scenarios. It simultaneously served the economic interests of media organizations that needed to captivate viewers and the political goals of a governments which desired public support for military intervention. Finally, this enigma provided an interpretive frame that suggested news viewers be politically passive but emotionally active, responding to events in the Gulf as spectators (Mann 1990).

## DEVELOPING ENIGMA THROUGH THE QUEST NARRATIVE

The main characters in the narrative established by the "will we fight?" enigma were apparent as early as August 3, 1990, when President Bush verbally committed U.S. military support to Saudi Arabia. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was quickly constructed in television and print news reports as a personalized showdown between George Bush and Saddam Hussein rather than an act of aggression by one Arab state toward another. The identification of heroes and villains forms the basis of the quest narrative, a structural frame on which television relies for both news and entertainment narratives. Sperry (1981) explains this standard narrative form:

> The world at peace is disrupted by some event . . . . That event becomes the evil, is named and, if possible, analyzed and understood. It is then attacked by some leader, the hero figure, often a representative of the people. However, this leader, whether by choice or by the nature of his vocation, may not be able to meet the problem alone. So he gains allies, other leaders, and he also gains enemies -- potential leaders who disagree with his plan of action, or rebels who align themselves with the evil. As these alignments become apparent, stories are then told of the effect of the problem on the average man [sic]. (301)

The elements of the quest narrative detailed by Sperry are easily identified in television news coverage of the Persian Gulf War. Coverage during the first month of Desert Shield improved Bush's popular standing, "hammered" Hussein and established the Hitler metaphor for him, and created a sense of urgency about the crisis (Dionne 1990). Television news organizations could depend on this quest structure to appeal to audiences and generate interest in the enigma. Politicians could use the quest narrative as an interpretive frame that justified military intervention in the Persian Gulf.

The key characteristics identified by Sperry are also evident in the newscasts analyzed here. ABC and CNN both emphasized Bush's leadership and his allies, described Hussein -- and often by extension, the Iraqi people -- as villainous, depicted protesters as rebels, and reported on the moods, beliefs, and reactions of "average" Americans. ABC began each day with reports on the president's moods, perhaps attending to Bush's earlier declaration "that he alone would decide for or against war, no matter what Congress or the public had to say" (Barber 1991:28). ABC gauged Bush's attitudes with quotes from Congressmen who said "he hasn't changed his view that force may well have to be used" and "he's still hopeful that we can have some peaceful resolution." Although Bush took little reported action that day beyond having "some public sport with a furry microphone," he remained the center of attention on ABC (January 14, 1991). The next day, ABC reporters described Bush as "at peace with himself," "resolute and confident," and with "a lot of thoughts about the American people" (January 15, 1991). Similarly, CNN described Bush as "reflective and resolute, and at peace with himself" (January 15, 1991). As the protagonist, Bush featured prominently in television newscasts regardless of his relative inaction.

CNN's coverage, though paralleling much of ABC's, provided a more tenuous link of Bush to the quest narrative. Although Russell eventually mentioned Bush and attributed a strong coalition to him, her January 14 newscast emphasized U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar's efforts to achieve peace. She began that evening with a story about the shooting of Palestine Liberation Organization members in Tunisia and then detailed both de Cuellar's activities and those of France in forwarding peace plans to the UN Security Council. Differences between CNN and ABC were also apparent in coverage of the impending ground offensive. Jennings introduced the first reporter package, labeled "The Ultimatum," by describing "a breathtaking 24 hours during which the Soviet/Iraqi plan for getting out of Kuwait has been completely eclipsed by the President's ultimatum" (February 22, 1991). During CNN newscasts, decisions were linked to those around Bush rather than isolating him as a leader. CNN reported that "members of Congress are backing President Bush's ultimatum to Iraq" and "allies want a tight time frame for the withdrawal" (February 22, 1991). ABC highlighted U.S. activities and goals, stating that negotiations were failing because they "would *fall short of what the Administration wanted*" (ABC, February 22, 1991). The differences are subtle, but they indicate the varying degrees to which television news organizations abide by the strictures of the quest narrative. Both ABC and CNN depicted dueling sides, but ABC privileged the U.S. role as leader and Bush as hero, while CNN stressed the team working with the protagonist.

As the war progressed, the most important team players featured on both ABC and CNN were the American troops. Many media critics have charged that journalists were "cheerleaders" for the military, and given the similarities of television's hermeneutic code to that of sports, the metaphor may be an apt one. For purposes of this analysis, however, it suffices to note that in addition to speculations about U.S. military actions, television news couched less honorable forms of U.S. military aggression -- such as the killing of civilians and the use of chemical weapons -- in defensive rather than offensive terms. So, when CNN reported that Marines used napalm against Iraq, it prefaced the information with Pentagon reports that "a U.S. Marine has been killed in the ground combat along the Kuwaiti border" and followed it with the comment that napalm "is used only to burn off oil in trenches around fortifications" (February 22, 1991). Presumably, napalm was a necessary response to an Iraqi ground offensive. ABC also explained that napalm bombs were being used "to burn off oil," and noted that the "front lines are being warned that one of every four Iraqi missiles contains poisoned gas" (February 22, 1991). The phrase "chemical weapons" was never used in conjunction with allied action but was assumed, without evidence, to be part of enemy attacks. Napalm bombs were shown as shiny metal canisters, without visual emphasis on their destructive capabilities. Pilots coming back from "stepped up" missions remarked not on the consequences of their attacks, but on the weather: "It's real nice up there today. The worst part is the oil smoke here" (ABC, February 22, 1991).

Of course, American television journalism cannot (nor, perhaps, should) be expected to focus on the more gruesome and tragic aspects of U.S. military action. And as many critics of military censorship during the Gulf War have argued, potentially damaging information about the consequences and conduct of U.S. actions in the Gulf was carefully controlled during the conflict. Television journalists who wanted to depict the horrors as well as the triumphs of war were constrained in gathering the information and video footage they needed until after the resolution of the hermeneutic code. But, more fundamentally, the quest narrative also limited this kind of reporting. Quest narratives require clear heroes and enemies, and questioning the legitimacy of the hero and his team would have threatened not only the cohesion of the narrative but also the authority of the narrator.

While Bush and his troops clearly constituted the heroes of the narrative, the Iraqi citizens were depicted as complicit followers of an evil, brutal enemy dictator. Television news characterizations of the Iraqi people dehumanized and distanced them from American viewers. For instance, both CNN and ABC called Iraq's version of Congressional authorization to use force a "rubber stamp" assembly meeting (January 14, 1991). But though both news organizations provided depictions of Iraqis, CNN spent much less time than ABC on these background reports. Russell, for example, merely referred to the "tens of thousands of Iraqis rallied around their leader and denounced President Bush," while ABC covered the event with reporter Gary Sheppard's package that included quotes from an Iraqi military leader and translations of chanting crowd members. "With our spirit, with our blood, we are with you, Saddam," Sheppard intoned, interpreting Iraqi slogans over footage of the parliament members clapping hands and raising fists (January 14, 1991). The next day, Sheppard continued his coverage of the Iraqi masses chanting and parading, with close shots of individual Iraqis reserved for soldiers and children in uniform (January 15, 1991). These portraits of the enemy differed substantially from those of Americans or their allies. Whereas Iraqi schools were closed so youngsters could take part in the government-organized demonstrations, in Israel a far more comfortable school setting was featured, where "school children are getting into the act with play [gas] masks, as if to make the real thing seem not so scary" (ABC, January 15, 1991). One characterization explains war by the fanaticism of Iraq, the other shows heroic bravery in the face of danger. Both neatly fit the development of the quest narrative.

Sperry outlines two final elements in the narrative: the emergence of rebels who align themselves with the enemy and reports of how the conflict is affecting the average person. In Gulf War television coverage, these two elements in the quest narrative were dichotomized as war protesters and supporters. "Average" Americans were assumed to be war supporters. As Cokie Roberts commented, "The American people support this war, and no one is Congress is going to even raise any questions whatsoever about it. One Democratic strategist said 'only 7 percent of American men . . . are against this war. We're not crazy enough to speak against it'" (ABC, February 22, 1991). To raise questions was to be a rebel.

Rebels were treated similarly in CNN and ABC news reports. Newscasts gave brief mention of protests around the country, frequently showing activists as small groups rather than using close shots of individuals or depicting substantial gatherings. In an apparent search for deviant behavior, Russell reported that Chicago and San Francisco protesters "snarled traffic" (January 14, 1991). That same day, Jennings noted that people "took to the streets" in those cities, and "some people opposed to the war took over the State House in Olympia, Washington. High school students opposed to the war walked out of class in Iowa and Minnesota." Both sets of comments were bracketed by longer stories about Americans showing support for the troops. When CNN and ABC did devote considerable time to the anti-war movement, packaged reports focused on protest as a form of expression rather than on the potential questions about foreign policy raised by the demonstrations. ABC's Ken Kashiwahara interviewed protesters who "simply wanted to talk about their frustrations, their fears," grouping peace activists with people who called crisis hotlines "just to talk" and who shouted hysterically during talk shows such as Oprah (January 14, 1991). Arguably, CNN lent legitimacy to the "new peace movement" by describing its "accelerating activities" as "more in the mainstream" than Vietnam-era protests. Brian Jenkins reported on "a new generation grappling for the first time with the prospect of a major war and just warming up to protest." But protest organizers were not asked for their views about the war or reasons for protesting; they were interviewed about the membership of peace movements and the social stigma of involvement (CNN, January 15, 1991). As the war progressed and support for it became equated with patriotism, protesters were increasingly portrayed as marginal and deviant. In television news, anti-war protesters became rebels without a cause.

Finally, average Americans were featured in the newscasts as small-town, predominantly white, middle-class, church-going war supporters. Gauging the mood of this group became a consistent preoccupation with television news organizations. For instance, CNN went to Glennville, GA, a rural town with "something special" that "makes it stand apart": a community support group for military families, where military wives feel "so good" and feel "so much love and affection. After all, "Glennville is good people" (January 14, 1991). ABC often used churches, church bells, and church services in its mood pieces:

> In Sioux Falls, office workers bowed their heads at their desks. In a Spokane, Washington high school, students paused for a minute of silent prayer. Nowhere were feelings more evident than at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, home of the 82nd Airborne Division, where friends and relatives prayed for those serving in the Gulf. (January 14, 1991)

Frequent reports of Americans praying for peace, tying yellow ribbons, sending letters, and voicing their concerns all created a sense of community and defined normal American responses to the war.

Developing the enigma through a quest narrative seemed to come naturally to television news, particularly for the more traditional and sophisticated ABC newscasts. This structural frame was also conveniently suited to a president who wished to take on an heroic role in foreign conflict. Not only was the hero quest a foreseeable frame for television news, it was, as Barber argues, a predictable adventure for Bush. "As he declared in accepting the Republican presidential nomination," Barber writes, "'I am a man who sees life in terms of missions' -- missions that have tended to be driven less by specific goals than by a vague quest for adventure and self-reliance" (1991:25-26). War afforded Bush the paradigmatic opportunity to embark on a hero's quest and revive sagging public ratings of his performance. The adoption of a quest frame by television journalists could only help Bush in his mission.

## CONCLUSION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE

This analysis indicates that both ABC and CNN adopted similar structural frames in their reporting of the Persian Gulf War. ABC's World News Tonight and CNN's Headline News posed the enigma, "Will the U.S. go to war with Iraq?," marked time with deadlines and ultimatums, used the structural frame of romantic quest to develop heroes, villains, allies and rebels, and focused audience concern on the outcome of the narrative. Television newscasts provided an interpretive framework through reporter packages that privileged military intervention and focused on war strategies. Before the first allied air strikes, television news had established a structural frame that fit the emerging needs of the Pentagon and White House.

ABC and CNN's reliance on speculations and scenarios about military action also established legitimacy for the plethora of retired generals and military experts in subsequent Gulf War coverage. As Katz writes, "Their expertise framed the public's response from the first brainy bomb, tilting it away from human costs or political implications of war toward the payload of F153s and the trajectory of patriots" (1991:93). But CNN, while focusing on tactical and strategic military analysis of the war, often presented the teamwork of allied forces rather than highlight Bush's role as a solitary leader. This different emaphsis in code may reflect the network's professed goal of portraying its coverage as more "international" in scope. CNN also began some newscasts with settings, such as Kuwaiti beaches and cities in Saudi Arabia, rather than the words or actions of key characters in the narrative. CNN thus showed less allegiance to the character development demanded by quest narratives while maintaining the structural frame with traditional us/them dualities and speculations of military action.

Additional differences between CNN and ABC news narratives can be identified. The structure of CNN's Headline News, with Gulf coverage, economic reports, sports highlights, and regular "updates" as part of each newscast, more closely resembled the "shopping list" organization of print news identified by Lewis (1991) and makes the title, Headline News, particularly appropriate. The print-based mode of organization, Lewis argues, discourages viewers from making connections between ideas and limits their understanding of news events to "moments of discursive or ideological resonance" (1991:143). Since television newscasts lack historic context for understanding action sequences, viewers either remember discrete moments of news that fit the interpretive frame provided by journalists, or viewers construct their own, alternative perspectives based on knowledge they have acquired from other sources. Viewer comprehension is aided when television adheres to the hermeneutic code, which emotionally engages the audience and carries them through the narrative to a satisfying resolution. ABC News, with its gifted narrator and solid reliance on narrative logic, is more apt to draw the audience into its stories and to exercise control over viewer responses.

Television journalism's reliance on enigmatic codes and quest narratives transcends issues of news bias and indicates the probable success of news management efforts that fit these structural logics. The framing devices of "will the U.S. go to war?" and "will we win?" inevitably focus on process and outcome, not deliberation and rationale. Larger issues, such as "why we fight," are subsumed under the enigmatic codes that best fit the logic of television. Similarly, the romantic quest is not necessarily contrived by politicians or journalists in a conscious attempt to use television news as propaganda. The quest narrative is culturally situated and is a pervasive part of popular American entertainment. Telling news stories with this structural frame might increase audience interest in and comprehension of television news. With this audience engagement, though, might also come an insidious form of ideological control that accompanies the quest narrative. The challenge for television journalism is to use structural frames that provide thematic continuity and aid audience comprehension without relying solely on those forms that implicitly support American military intervention.

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# EFFECTS OF A ONE-WEEK CHANGE IN MEDIA HABITS ON KNOWLEDGE AND JUDGMENTS ABOUT PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY CANDIDATES:

## A FIELD EXPERIMENT

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## ABSTRACT

In a field experiment 274 county school district employees agreed to change their media habits for getting political information to television alone, newspapers alone, both TV _and_ newspapers, or to avoid TV _and_ newspapers. A fifth group was pretested without receiving media use instructions; a sixth group was post-tested one week later. Independent judges scored subjects' candidate characterizations for objectivity-subjectivity, positivity-negativity and "visualness." Those both TV _and_ newspaper dependent who used newspapers alone or media of choice during the experiment learned the most. Those newspaper _and_ TV dependent who used newspapers _and_ TV were the least objective. Those TV dependent using newspapers were most objective. Those not media dependent who used newspapers _and_ TV, gave the most "visible" characterizations and the least "visible" characterizations were given by those both newspaper _and_ TV dependent and who used newspapers _and_ TV. Those TV dependent who used newspapers alone, or those newspaper dependent who used TV alone became the most negative.

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Running head: MEDIA HABITS

In the 1991-92 political campaign, new approaches to media coverage of the campaign have become the rule rather than the exception. The amount of coverage by the national networks has declined, while coverage by non-traditional media has increased from interviews of candidates on "Larry King Live" to MTV coverage of the conventions.

During the past two decades researchers have looked at the effects of different news media, in particular television versus newspapers, on the political spectrum. (See, for example, Becker & Whitney, 1980; Berry, 1983; Culbertson & Stempel, 1986; Gunter, 1987; McDonald, 1983; McLeod, Glynn, and McDonald, 1983; McDonald, 1983; Miller & Reese, 1982; O'Keefe, 1980; Patterson & McClure, 1976; Roberts, 1985; Robinson & Davis, 1989; Robinson & Levy, 1986).

## Differences For Television and Newspaper News

Patterson & McClure (1976) found that TV news focused on the visual nature of the political campaign rather than on issues, while newspapers focused more on the substance of the campaign. Meyrowitz (1985) reports that TV contributes most to beliefs about candidates personality.

Robinson (1975) found television news to be mostly negative and confrontational with a focus on image and impressions rather than substance. Robinson concludes that this leads those dependent on TV to have a negative view of government. He found, for example, that those who watched the Watergate hearings on TV were more hostile to government than those who did not (Robinson, 1974).

Patterson & McClure (1976) found TV is less effective in transmitting factual information and influencing the importance audience members attach to issues than are newspapers. Research by Robinson and Davis (1989) supports this view of TV news as contributing very little to learning: "Respondents who use and claim to depend on newspapers for most of their news emerge with consistently higher comprehension/information scores than those who depend on TV" (p. 18). Pfau (1990), on the other hand, reports that TV, like interpersonal communication, has more ability to influence or to persuade than does print media.

## Differences For Habitual Users of Television Versus Newspapers

Generally, trend analysis shows that newspaper circulation has decreased relative to the number of households and it is a widely held belief that TV news is the prime source of information for most citizens. Thus, the question of interest has often been, "How do users of different media differ?" Gerbner et al., (1984) reported that heavy TV viewers are more moderate politically and light TV viewers vary more on liberalness or conservativeness than do heavy viewers. Heavy newspaper readers tended to be liberal. Gerbner el al., concluded that TV is moderate and it cultivates the middle view rather than extremes.

In earlier related work, Gerbner and Gross (1976) reported that heavy TV viewers generally (rather than for news specifically) are more likely to exaggerate both the likelihood they would be crime victims and that others cannot be trusted. Clarke and Fredin (1980) found in a post-election survey with 1,883 adults in 1974 that newspaper use correlated with preference for senatorial candidates, and TV exposure was negatively associated with political reasoning.

In contrast, Becker and Whitney (1980) find little evidence to argue that attitudes or opinions overall are affected by television news exposure. Becker et al., (1979) reported a substantial difference between news as shown on television and that presented in the daily newspaper, but the differences they found for those who were media dependent were less all-encompassing: there were no effects at the federal level and effects at local level were only for young respondents low in education and older respondents high in education. Newspaper dependents were more knowledgeable about local government than non-newspaper dependents; those who were TV dependent were low in knowledge about government. Likewise, Graber (1988) finds that most people do not learn very much from television news, or if they do learn, they forget it quickly.

Yet other research on media reliance also finds that those who rely on the print media are likely to learn more than those who rely on the broadcast media; the better educated are more likely to rely on newspapers for information (McLeod and McDonald, 1985). When knowledge is assessed as information holding (number of problems respondents can identify), education alone is found to be a stronger predictor than media use. Studies find positive correlations for TV dependency with political cynicism, feelings of inefficacy, misperceptions of candidate strength, and negative beliefs about government. Intervening variables include interest in politics, motivation for using media, group membership, degree of nationalism, number of similarly oriented peers and discussion partners, age, and education. (Roberts & Maccoby, 1985).

## Why Are Those Who Habitually Use Different Media Different?

Theorists offer many different explanations for these differences. Graber (1988) offers a differential information processing explanation. In a content analysis comparing national news networks with major daily newspapers, she [unlike Becker et al., (1979)] found that news is a standard product; the content--regardless of whether it is a national news broadcast or a newspaper--of the news is almost identical. Graber concluded that TV simplifies while the printed word requires translating; TV speaks to inner meaning and reading is more work than TV.[1] This perspective concludes differences in processing lead to differences in what is retained from the medium even though the content is similar.

Donohew (1984) offers a similar explanation; TV requires less effort because information is already decoded when verbal information is presented, and the visual channel supports or reinforces the verbal one. Milburn et al., (1987) offer a corresponding explanation based upon findings from a content analysis of news stories about terrorism. They found that 40 percent of the stories about terrorism and political violence offered no explanation and thus encouraged sequential or non-causal thinking; again, TV presents simple explanations. Milburn et al., (1988) found a significant negative effect of watching TV on the complexity of the attributions offered for terrorism. Those watching less TV were more likely to offer an external (causal factors external to the situation) explanation or and internal and external explanation. In a second study with a sample of 45, Milburn et al., (1988) manipulated exposure to TV news about political violence. Those who thought TV was highly accurate and were exposed said that internal factors were most important to explain violence, while those who said TV was not accurate said that external factors were more important.

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[1] *Not all researchers agree that political messages delivered on television are always simple. Kraus (1988) and Harris (1989) argue that one instance where TV presents detailed positions or complex issues is with political debates.*

Another explanation focuses on the dramatic nature of television. Milburn and McGrail (1990) suggest that the drama of TV evokes emotions that activate a simplifying schema for the viewers, thus reducing the cognitive complexity with which viewers think about the events. To test this notion, Milburn and McGrail (1990) experimented with dramatic news stories in comparison with those same stories with the dramatic scenes edited out. Controlling for background variables, such as education and ideology, those who saw the unedited dramatic stories recalled less of the story and had less complex thoughts than those who saw the non-dramatic stories.

Related to this explanation is the notion that prior interest (as well as prior media habits) influences how information is integrated. The media reinforce what we already believe--people condense messages both to save time and to simplify and the brief time of TV inhibits information transfer. Pictures, particularly closeups, allow assessment of credibility, are most readily recalled, and we think they are more complete and accurate impressions of people or events.

## INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL THINKING

Research in the political science and political psychology arena offers some theoretical explanations for systematic differences in the way citizens think about politics. Over 30 years ago, Campbell, et al., (1960) in the much cited, The American Voter, suggested four approaches to thinking about politics: ideologues (issue-oriented), social (group-oriented), event (nature of the times-oriented) and no issue content (personality-oriented). Only a small percentage of voters (12 percent) were issue oriented.

Rosenberg (1987, 1988a, 1988b), strongly influenced by Piaget's model of cognitive development, studied differences in thinking about politics. He found a relationship between thinking--measured by a Piagetian test of cognitive development--and level of political reasoning; the level of political thinking paralleled thinking on Piagetian tasks. Individuals thought about politics in three different ways: sequential (with no abstractions or generalizations), linear (in bi-variate causal terms), or systematic (as factors interacting in non-linear ways). He found that extremity of ideological self-identification varied by the complexity of thinking; systematic thinkers are more ideologically extreme than sequential or linear thinkers.

Many theorists have pointed to the importance of candidate image in determining voting patterns (Jamieson & Campbell, 1992; Kinder & Sears, 1985). Graber (1987) concludes that character traits are most important to voting patterns and that TV gives trait information not otherwise available, such as leadership and competence.

Johnston (1989) explored whether an issue or image ad orientation would affect subjects thoughts following advertising. He showed two different TV ads--one with an image orientation and one with an issue orientation--to 113 members of men's and women's organizations. Neither resulted in more image or issue responses for thought listing. About 45 percent of the subjects were image oriented (focused on appearance, character, personality or behavior), 34 percent were issue oriented (focused on political role, performance, issue stands or relevant experience), and 21 percent were both. An issue-processing orientation was positively correlated with income and negatively correlated with age, and an image orientation was positively associated with education and age; these processing biases were not related to political involvement or knowledge. Johnston, much like Graber (1988), speculates that people have different ability levels to process information and this results in differences in abilities to evaluate candidates on issues and personality.

## The Political Expert and the Novice

Lau & Erber (1985) report that experts have more stable and consistent attitudes and use more issues to evaluate presidential candidates. Luske & Judd (1988) found that experts use more attributes in differentiating among candidates, more candidate features (He's a Democrat), and relevant information (I campaigned for him) than do novices; attributes become more redundant and more extreme with increasing level of expertise. As with Rosenberg's work, Luske & Judd (1988) found that experts evaluate more extremely than those who are less expert. Other have found that experts have more information and are better able to retrieve it and use it more quickly than novices. (Reder & Anderson, 1980; Smith, Adams & Schoor, 1978). The reason for this may be the complexity of the expert's schema; it is better organized and information is "chunked" or grouped allowing easier access.

## Political Schemas As Information Processing Filters

A "schema-based" processing approach is yet another individual difference perspective on information processing. Schemas are commonly defined as cognitive structures of organized knowledge about situations and individuals abstracted from prior experiences and used to store and to process new information. According to Graber (1988) schemas (see Barlett, 1932, for original discussion of this notion) allow us to find information that is important to integrate: they allow us to filter, select, encode and integrate new information, and they influence information retrieval.

Schematics (those with a schema) recall more information overall about candidates than do aschematics, but not with better accuracy (Lau & Erber, 1985). Fiske et al., (1983) applied the schema notion to the categories of political experts or novices and reported systematic differences in ways that experts and novices process information; novices remember more consistent information while experts remember more inconsistent information and organize the information differently than do novices.

Lau (1986) has conducted research on political schemas. He found four different political schemas used by respondents: issues, groups, personality, and party. Hamil, Lodge, and Blake, (1985) found three different schemas used to view politics: rich/poor (class), Democrat/Republican (party), and liberal-conservative (ideology).

Other work on political schemas suggests person, self, role, and event schemas. Person schemas (for example, Bush's attempts to label Dukakis a liberal and link liberalness to being soft on crime and defense and a willingness to tax and spend.) have served as a useful heuristic in political cognition research (Fiske and Taylor, 1984). Studies by Fiske (1982) asked subjects to sort and label 50 photographs of members of Congress. The labels most commonly used were: conservative, crook, and Honest Abe. In a second study the researchers labeled each of four pictures either as a person or a politician. Subject evaluated the photos on a good-vs-bad scale. Those who looked like politicians (stereotypically) had lower evaluative ratings when labeled politician than when labeled person. Thus schemas are believed to affect evaluation of political stimuli.

Activation of a political schema can cause a reduction in the complexity of thinking used to evaluate political stimuli (Milburn, 1991). When a liberal/conservative schema is activated and the complexity of the schematic thinking is reduced, this may be evidence for heuristic processing (Chaiken, 1980). Kahneman and Tversky (1974) propose that cognitive heuristics serve as short cuts for judgments and lead to bias and errors in decision making. For example, the availability heuristic helps us judge the likelihood of events based on how easy it is bring the event to mind. Those events that are "visual" in nature (for example, Willie Horton in 1988) are more likely to lead to bias in processing.

## THE PROBLEM OF CORRELATIONAL ANALYSIS

Most evidence for the relationship of media use to political judgments is from correlational field studies relating viewing preferences to patterns of general behavior (Pressley & Levin, 1983), but many researchers are highly critical of correlational studies: "These results were consistent with the earlier content analysis results but since the analysis was correlational, the direction of causal influence was ambiguous" (Milburn, 1991, p. 148). Rothschild (1975) argues that in order to be more confident of the findings there must be an experimental design to separate key independent variables and eliminate contamination from the environment. Yet others argue that the effects of media styles are difficult to evaluate except on an intuitive level (Finkelstein, 1986; Theall, 1971; McGuire, 1986).

## MEDIA DEPENDENCY IN THE PRE-PRIMARY SETTING

The research study reported in this paper is an attempt to collect experimental field data to address the question: Does dependency on a particular media source and either later use of this same or of different media affect how we learn and make judgments about political candidates in a pre-primary setting?

Given the long time period of the American primary system, some might say, "Why be concerned about pre-primary use of the media? We have at least a whole year to learn about the candidates!" For many, the pre-primary is when first impressions are being made, i.e., when schemas are being formed that will have a direct impact on how later information about the candidate is processed. And, in fact, many citizens appear to make their judgments about for whom they will vote very early in the campaign. Results from personal interviews from May to November found that half of those surveyed knew in May for whom they would vote in November. Only eight percent changed substantially during campaign and most changes were in the direction of pre-campaign predispositions (Becker et al., 1975).

Several hypotheses guided the development of the study.[2] It is hypothesized that when people are restricted to a particular medium for information about political candidates, this will affect the amount of information learned and the nature of that information. Hearn (1989) restricted viewing to the least preferred channel and found decreased viewing frequency; attraction to content influences behavior. In reality our choices of media for political information are often constrained. Some people may not have access to or the time to watch television news, while others may not have the skills or other resources to get political news in the newspaper.

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[2] *The specific research hypotheses are reported in the findings sections for the sake of parsimony, but general theoretical hypotheses are presented here.*

Second, it is expected that individual differences in media habits for learning about politics will affect the amount of information processed; specifically newspaper use and dependency will lead to greater levels of knowledge about political candidates, while television use and dependency will lead to less abstract and more negative and subjective characterizations of political candidates.

Finally, it is hypothesized that when the media used are the same as those normally relied upon for political information, there will be stronger effects; we learn the most from the medium with which we are most familiar.

## METHOD

To address these hypotheses about the effects of changes in media habits on judgments about candidates, the researchers conducted a field experiment with a sample from a list of 4,000 employees of a county school district in Alachua County, Florida.[3]

### The Prescreening Survey

A prescreening phone survey was conducted during the week of November 11th, 1991.[4] To determine eligibility for the experiment subjects were questioned about their access to a daily newspaper and to cable television (or a satellite dish). Those respondents who indicated they subscribed to or otherwise had access to a daily newspaper at least 5 or 6 days a week and who had cable television were asked a series of baseline questions. Interviewers asked about media use for national and international news as well as reliance on the media for this information and for information about political candidates. In addition, subjects were asked if they knew who was likely to become a candidate for the 1992 presidential primaries. For each candidate named, subjects were asked "What can you tell me about ......?" Responses were coded verbatim. Next, using a list of nine individuals we believed likely to run for office (Brown, Buchanan, Bush, Clinton, Cuomo, Harkin, Kerry, Tsongas, and Wilder), respondents were read the potential candidate's last name. Interviewers asked if they had heard of the person and, if so, did they know the candidate's first name, state of origin, and most recent or current government position. This was followed by a question asking whether there was anything about the candidate's appearance that stood out. A similar question about the issues the candidate would focus on for his campaign followed. The interviewer then invited the respondent to participate in the experiment and to change his or her media habits for the next week.

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[3] *The ratio of females to males was 3 to 2, thus, the list (which contained the employees' names, phone numbers, and positions) was stratified by gender to increase the probability of having a reasonably large sample of males in the study.*

[4] *Interviews began on Wednesday and continued through Sunday. Interviewers called every 4th male and every 6th female on the list. Each interviewer completed interviews with 10 subjects. An attempt was made to contact each person in the sample at least three times at different times of the day and days of the week.*

## The Experimental Media Constraints

Prior to being called, each subject had been randomly assigned to one of the following six experimental conditions:

1) UNRESTRAINED--These subjects had only to agree to be phoned in one week to find out what they had learned about the upcoming primaries. There were no restraints on the sources they could use to learn this information.[5]

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[5] *The following statement was read to the subjects: "If you are willing to help, I will call you within one week to discover what you may have been able to find out about the forthcoming presidential primaries and candidates. I think you will find this an interesting thing to do. Also, you will be helping me learn about politics. May I count on your help?"*

2) TV AND NEWSPAPERS FOR POLITICAL NEWS--These subjects agreed to read a newspaper and watch television every day for one week to learn about the primary candidates.[6]

3) NEWSPAPERS ALONE FOR POLITICAL NEWS--These randomly selected subjects agreed to read a newspaper every day for political information and to avoid watching TV news programming about politics.[7]

4) TELEVISION ALONE FOR POLITICAL NEWS--These subjects were randomly selected to watch TV for political information and to avoid reading political news in a newspaper.[8]

5) AVOID BOTH TV AND NEWSPAPERS FOR POLITICAL NEWS--Subjects randomly selected to this condition had to agree to avoid both reading newspaper news about political candidates and watching TV programming about candidates for one week.[9]

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[6] *The following statement was read to the subjects: "If you are willing to help, we are going to ask you to change one small habit for the next week. First, we'd like you watch national news programs, such as Nightline, CNN or network nightly news on TV for a minimum of 15 minutes each day during the next week for information about the presidential primaries next year. Second, we'd like you to read newspapers for at least 15 minutes a day for political information on candidates. Will you read a newspaper for 15 minutes a day and watch TV news about politics for 15 minutes each day? I will call you in a week so that you can tell me what you think about what you saw on television and read in your newspaper. I think you will find this an interesting thing to do. Also, you will be helping me to learn about how the media are presenting political information. May I count on your help?"*

[7] *The following statement was read to the subjects: "If you are willing to help, we are going to ask you to change one small habit for the next week. First, we'd like you to read a newspaper for 15 minutes each day during this one week for information about the presidential primaries next year. Second, we'd like you to avoid watching TV news programs about political information or candidates. Will you read a newspaper for 15 minutes a day and avoid watching TV news about politics? I will call you in a week so that you can tell me what you think about what you read in your newspaper. I think you will find this an interesting thing to do. Also, you will be helping me to learn about how the media are presenting political information. May I count on your help?"*

[8] *The following statement was read to the subjects: "If you are willing to help, we are going to ask you to change one small habit for the next week. First, we'd like you to watch national news programs such as Nightline, CNN or network nightly news on TV for a minimum of 15 minutes each day during this one week for information about the presidential primaries next year. Second, we'd like you to avoid reading newspaper articles about political information or candidates. Will you watch TV for 15 minutes a day and avoid reading newspaper articles about politics? I will call you in a week so that you can tell me what you think about what you saw on television. I think you will find this an interesting thing to do. Also, you will be helping me to learn about how the media are presenting political information. May I count on your help?"*

[9] *The following statement was read to the subjects: "If you are willing to help, we are going to ask you to change one small habit for the next week. First, we'd like you to avoid reading newspaper articles about political information about the presidential primaries each day during this one week. Second, we'd like you to avoid watching TV news programs about political candidates. Will you agree to avoid reading newspaper articles and watching TV news about politics for the next week? I will call you in a week so that you can tell me what you think about this experience with "political information avoidance." I think you will find this an interesting thing to do. Also,*

The phone survey was concluded with questions about marital status, education, ideology, and gender.[10] A total of 451 subjects agreed to participate in the study.

## The Post Test

The success rate for the call-backs was 61.2 percent; 276 subjects were reached. In addition, interviewers completed interviews with 65 subjects who had been randomly selected earlier to serve as an unpretested control group (N = 341). In the posttest all subjects were asked questions about their knowledge of the candidates (first and last names of those running, state of residence, most recent government position, the issues the candidates would focus on, and what stood out about the candidate's physical appearance). Subjects were asked what they had learned about the candidate during the past week and their source for this information. Near the end of the interview subjects were asked, "Do you remember if we asked you to do any of the following things at the end of the last interview? Did we ask you to: Watch TV for at least 15 minutes each day for political information, read a newspaper for at least 15 minutes each day for political information, both watch TV 15 minutes a day and read a newspaper 15 minutes each day for political information, avoid watching or reading stories about political information on TV or in the newspaper, or did we not ask you to do anything?" This was followed by a question asking how many of the past seven days the subject had done the assignment and how difficult or easy it was to do it. The final questions in the study asked about the preferred candidate at that point and the subjects political party affiliation, if any.

## The Manipulation Check

Of those in the "unconstrained media" condition, 60 percent (N = 36) correctly reported that had not been asked to do anything. Of

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(footnote continued)

*you will be helping me to learn from the media. May I count on your help?"*

[10] *Those who agreed to change their media habits were reminded they would be called in one week and were asked whether this was a convenient time for them or, if not, what would be a convenient time.*

those in the television and newspaper condition, 69.1 percent (N = 38) correctly reported that they had been asked to watch TV and read the newspaper for political information. Of those in the newspaper alone condition, 78.6 percent (N = 44) correctly reported the assignment. For those in the TV alone condition, 73.6 percent (N = 39) correctly reported their assignment. Finally, for those who were asked to avoid both newspapers and television, 84.2 percent (N = 48) correctly reported the assignment. Only those subjects who correctly reported their assignment were included in the analysis.[11]

### Measuring Media Use Habits

Research reporting the effects of media use has used many different approaches to measurement. Some have measured the amount of exposure (Choi, et al., 1991; Ferguson, et al., 1985; Lindlof, 1986); the number of programs watched (Allen, 1981; Price & Allen, 1989; Perse, 1986; Elliot & Rosenberg, 1987); how often television is viewed (Culbertson & Stempel, 1986); time spent with the media (Rubin, et al., 1986; Donohew, et al., 1987; Rimmer & Weaver, 1987); days per week of exposure (Choi, et al., 1991; Gandy, Metabane & Omachonu, 1987; Culbertson & Stempel, 1986); while others have asked for reports of media use yesterday (Rimmer & Weaver, 1987). Another approach is to ask respondents about their media preference, if they had to choose one (Rimmer & Weaver, 1987).

Some of the research has taken a more "psychological" perspective and asked about the amount of attention, reliance, dependence, or involvement with the media. Attention is sometimes a self-report of other things the respondent is doing while using the medium (Levy & Windahl, 1984), or a self-report of attention (Kennamer, 1987). Chaffee & Schleuder (1986) conceptualized media attention as having four factors: National Attention, Foreign Attention, Newspaper attention, and TV attention. Attention, in their view, refers to increased mental effort and is a covert mental activity; to measure attention in a survey they ask respondents to self-report their "attention" to news in the four categories mentioned above. They conclude, "Attention to news media appears to be a consistent individual difference that accounts for substantial variation in learning beyond the effects of simple exposure" (p. 102).

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[11] *Eliminating the 67 subjects who did not correctly report their media constraint assignment left 209 subjects, plus the 65 subjects who were not pretested but were randomly selected to be called at the posttest as controls, for a total of 274 subjects.*

In the study reported here both media exposure and attention are assumed to be necessary, but not sufficient conditions for news media dependency, and news media dependency is defined as a psychological preference for, attachment to, and reliance on a particular source for news information. Thus, while someone may indicate high levels of reliance on or attachment to a medium, dependence increases as exposure go up.[12]

Four different questions are used to measure the subject's dependence on television news. First, to measure television news exposure we asked, "In an average week, how many days do you watch national news channels such as CNN or C-SPAN or programs such as 60 Minutes, 20/20, Nightline, Meet the Press, Good Morning America, or the network news on television?"

Next, we identified a major source of news preference by following up with, "Of the national or international news programs or channels you watch, which one do you prefer the most?" For this preferred source, we obtained measures of attachment to this source with two other questions, scaled from 1 to 5: "If for some reason you were not able to watch . . . again, would you miss it: extremely, very much, somewhat, a little or not at all?"; and "How bothered would you be if you could not watch (preferred program)? Would you be bothered extremely, very much, somewhat, a little, or not at all?" Finally, to tap a general factor of reliance (exclusive of the program or channel) we asked, "Now with regard to politics, how much do you rely on TV news and other program for information about political issues and about candidates? Do you rely: extremely, very much, somewhat, a little or not at all on TV for this information."

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[12] *A useful analogy is found in drug and alcohol dependence; although an individual may indicate a psychological reliance on alcohol, it does not make much sense to argue that person is alcohol-dependent unless there is actual use of alcohol.*

The same series of questions (number of days read about national or international news in a newspaper, how much the most-often read newspaper would be missed, how bothered he or she would be if they were not able to read the paper, and how much he or she relies on newspaper generally for information about political issues and candidates) was repeated for newspaper use.

To create our psychological attraction measures, the responses for these three questions were summed together and averaged. Next the subject's weekly media exposure value was multiplied by the average self-report of reliance on the medium and transformed into a daily "dependence" measure. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients, computed for the two four-item indices, were: newspaper dependency = .72. and TV dependency = .65.

To create high and low categories of newspaper and television dependence, those respondents who said that in an average day they relied extremely, or very much on the medium, would be bothered extremely or very much if they were not able to use it, and would miss it extremely or very much (i.e., having an average mean > 3.0) were classified as high in dependency on that medium.[13] For newspaper dependency, 46.7 percent were classified as high and for TV dependency 35 percent were classified as high.[14]

## Dependent Variables--Characterizations of Candidates

There are two different classes of dependent variables: those measuring knowledge held about the candidates and those measuring the objectivity, positivity, and visual nature of the respondent's characterizations of the candidates.[15]

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[13] *We decided to use categories representing what we judged to be "high" dependency rather than using the median (or mean) split approach because we did not want to let the subject pool itself determine the category split.*

[14] *When TV dependency is crossed by newspaper dependency, 37.5 percent were low in both types of media dependency, 18.8 percent were high in both types, 28.0 percent were high in newspaper dependency and low in TV dependency and 15.7 percent were high in TV dependency and low in newspaper dependency.*

[15] *To determine these characterizations , each respondent was asked for each potential candidate: "Can you tell me what ..... looks like, in other words, his physical appearance?" Interviewers continued probing for each candidate until the respondent offered no further characterization. Each judgment was given a separate code number.*

The 292 physical judgments characterizations generated by the respondents were coded by a panel of judges, in three separate settings, on the negativity or positivity of the judgment, the subjectivity or objectivity of the judgment, and whether the judgment is one that could be made without actually seeing the candidate.

## Positivity of Descriptions of Candidates

A total of 20 judges rated the 292 character descriptions in terms of whether the judgment was positive, negative, or neutral. Judges were told: "A positive attribution could be said to be 'something nice, a compliment'" and "A negative attribution could be said to be 'something not nice, something that detracts from the candidate'." Judges were told that if they did not think the statement conveyed either positive or negative information, they could circle the word "neutral."

Appendix A, Table No. A1 presents the rankings for the physical descriptions from those that were judged as positive by 100 percent of the judges to those not ranked as positive by any judges. The items ranked as positive by most judges were: honest, mature, impressive, healthy/fit, classic, carries self well, dresses appropriately, good eye contact, intelligent, competent, good sense of humor, pleasant voice, pleasant, energetic, and clean cut. Descriptions that were not ranked as positive by any judges included: dishonest, unorthodox looking, squeaky voice, monotone voice, whiny voice, unpresidential, portrays underworld, unfit, weasely, looks ethnic, tired, unpleasant, bland, disabled, receding hair, mole on face, not much hair, white hair, not small, non-descriptive, not tall, big nose, frowns a log, bushy eyebrows, swarthy, skinny, pointy or thin nose, overweight, greasy hair, baggy eyes, jutting chin, teeth need work, not round face, little eyes, meaty face, poor posture, small mouth, stocky, not good looking, ugly, unattractive, beady eyes, never seen, and bags under eyes.

Each attribution was coded with a value representing the proportion of judges who indicated it was a positive description. An overall positivity score was created by summing over the values attached to each judgment and dividing by the number of judgments to represent positivity about all the candidates described. For example, if a subject described the political candidates as ugly, bald, and unfit, each attribution would receive a score of zero and the overall positivity score would be zero. On the other hand, if a subject described the candidates as intelligent, competent, and articulate, he or she would earn an average positivity score of 92.3.

## Objectivity of Descriptions of Candidates

A total of 19 judges rated the descriptions given by the subjects from the pretest and later from the post test in terms of whether the judgment was subjective or objective. A subjective attribution was defined as, existing "in the mind of the observer and not the object. Other terms for subjective attribution are: personal, biased, unfair, unjust, partial, prejudiced, or predisposed." Judges were told that an objective attribution belonged, "to the object and not the observer. Some other terms similar in meaning are: impersonal, unbiased, fair, just, impartial, unprejudiced, or neutral." Judges were told that an objective attribution is not affected by personal beliefs, biases or prejudices, but a subjective attribution is. If the judge thought the attribution was mostly objective, the "O" was to be circled, otherwise the instruction was to circle "S".

Appendix A, Table A2 ranks the descriptions from those that were said to be objective by 100 percent of the judges to those not ranked as objective by any judges. The items ranked as objective by most judges were: no facial hair, bow-ties, medal winner, illness, dark eyes, three-piece suit, female, artificial limb, no glasses, Vietnam vet, and bachelor. Those characterizations ranked as subjective by most judges were: bland, idiot, weasley, sleazy, non-descriptive, familiar looking, wild looking, too media looking, wimpy, unorthodox looking, cocky, impressive, unfit, two-faced, unpresidential, and flamboyant.

Each attribution was coded with a value representing the proportion of judges who indicated it was a objective description and the objectivity score--summed over the judgments--was divided by the number of judgments to represent average objectivity for all the candidates described.

## Visual Descriptions of Candidates

Finally, 19 judges rated the descriptions from the pretest and later from the posttest on whether or not the judgment could be made without actually seeing a photo or video image. If the judge believed that an attribution could be made without ever having seen a photo, video or other physical image or the candidate, i.e., "sight unseen," they were to indicate that they did not need to see a person to come to this judgment.

Appendix A. Table A3 ranks the physical descriptions from those where 100 percent of the judges said they needed to "see" the candidate to make that judgment to those where the judges said they could make the evaluation without a physical image of the candidate. Those attributions most judges said could be made "sight unseen" were: dishonest, articulate, Christian, male, amusing, intelligent, liberal, conservative, bachelor, and Vietnam vet. Those characterizations most judges said they need to see the candidate to make were: chip-monkey face, all-American look, too media looking, beady eyes, smirky grin, nice chin, not good looking, politician look, straight-forward look, ugly, unattractive, Bush-like look, relaxed look, medium build, heavy, rectangular face, and looks good.

Each attribution was coded with a value representing the proportion of judges who indicated it was a visible judgment and this score--summed over the judgments--was divided by the number of judgments to represent average visibleness of the candidate descriptions for all the candidates.

## Test-Retest Reliability

To test the reliability of the judges' coding, 60 items were duplicated on the two of the attribution judging forms. The 'test-retest' correlation was .98 for the "objective" judgments and .74 for the "visibleness" judgments.

### The Knowledge Measures

Each knowledge question was analyzed separately and an overall summed knowledge index was created. The questions used here were: the number of candidates the subjects could name unaided; the number of correct first names, state of residence, current or most recent government position the subject could give; the number of issues the subject said the candidates would focus on; the number of appearance attributes the subject could give for the candidates; and the number of issues the subject said they had learned about in the past week. Cronbach's alpha for this five-item index was .89.

## THE RESULTS

### The Subjects

The median income of those in the study was $24,700 (M = $26,521). Teachers and nurses made up 65.2 percent of the sample; 5.1 percent were administrators and the rest (29.7%) were in positions such as food service, maintenance, bus driver or crossing guard. About one-third (31.4%) self-described as liberals, two-fifths (42.2%) said they were moderates, and over one-fourth (26.5%) said they were conservatives. On the average, the subjects said they watched the national news on television about 5.3 days per week (S.D. = 2.2) and read a daily newspaper about 5.4 days per week (S.D. 2.2).

### Effects of the Media Use Constraints

The first step in the analysis was to test the media use conditions against the unpretested control group for all dependent variables.[16] Tables 1 and 2 present the means for each media use conditions. For overall knowledge (Table No. 1) those in the newspaper alone media condition (M = 37.2) learned significantly more than those randomly selected to serve as controls and not pretested (M = 27.6).

For the candidate characterization of objectivity, positivity, and visualness there were two significant differences for the media use conditions in comparison with the unpretested-unrestrained control group. Table No. 2 presents the means for each: There is a significant difference for objectivity and positivity (M = 47.8 & M = 30.1) for those who used both newspapers and television when compared with those not pretested, and in the unrestrained randomly selected control group (M's = 54.6 & 22.3, respectively.)

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[16] *The statistic used here was a LSD post hoc difference of means test at the .05 level.*

The next section reports the results for the tests of the specific research hypotheses developed earlier in the paper.[17]

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[17] *As noted in the earlier section, the research hypotheses are presented in the analysis section for the sake of parsimony.*

Table No. 1 Means for Knowledge About Political Candidates for Media Use Conditions and the Unpretested Control Group

| | Means: | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conditions: | Knowledge of First & Last Names | Facts Known | Issues Learned | Candidate Issues | Appearance Factors | Overall Knowledge Index |
| Control Group: Not Constrained (Not pretested) | 2.7[a] | 09.7[a] | 1.2[a] | 5.2 | 8.5 | 27.6[a] |
| Avoid TV & Newspapers | 4.0 | 11.1 | 0.5[b] | 4.8 | 7.3 | 27.7 |
| TV Alone | 4.2[b] | 12.0 | 1.0 | 5.2 | 7.6 | 29.9 |
| Newspapers Alone | 6.6[b] | 15.8[b] | 1.6 | 5.3 | 8.0 | 37.2[b] |
| Newspaper & Television Use | 4.4[b] | 13.0 | 1.3 | 4.1 | 8.3 | 31.0 |
| Media Not Constrained (Pretested) | 5.4[b] | 13.3[b] | 1.1 | 5.1 | 7.1 | 31.5 |

Table 2 Means for Objective, Positive, and Visual Characterizations by Media Use Conditions and the Unpretested Control Group

| | Means for Characterization of Candidates on | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Conditions: | Objectivity | Positivity | Visualness |
| Control Group: Not Constrained (Not pretested) | 54.6[a] | 22.3[a] | 64.3 |
| Avoid TV & Newspapers | 56.2 | 22.9 | 63.1 |
| TV Alone | 55.8 | 23.8 | 64.8 |
| Newspapers Alone | 53.9 | 21.9 | 67.0 |
| Newspaper & Television Use | 47.8[b] | 30.1[b] | 66.5 |
| Media Not Constrained, (Pretested) | 53.5 | 30.0 | 65.1 |

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[a,b] Means sharing superscripts are statistically significantly different from the mean of the control group.

## Newspaper Effects

### Newspaper use leads to knowledge about politics

The first set of hypotheses refers to those who used newspapers for information about political candidates:

H1: Those who used newspapers alone or

H2: both newspapers and television

will have more knowledge about political candidates than will those who used television alone for political information.

Hypothesis one is supported; the use of newspapers alone rather than TV alone led to greater knowledge about the political candidates: The numbers of candidate's first and last names correctly reported was 6.6 for those using newspapers and 4.2 for those using television [$T(81) = 2.52$, $p < .008$]. The number of correct facts known about the primary candidates was 15.8 for those using newspapers while for those using television it was 12.0, [$T(81) = 2.04$, $p < .023$]. The mean number of issues learned during the one-week period of the experiment was 1.59 for those using newspapers and .95 for those using TV [$T(76.03) = 1.97$, $p < .037$]. For the overall knowledge measure, the mean for newspaper use was 37.2 and for television it was 29.9 [$T(81) = 1.49$, $p < .071$]. There were, however, no significant differences for those who used newspapers versus television for the number of issues subjects believed candidates would focus on ($M = 5.3$ & $M = 5.2$, respectively) and for the number of physical attributes subjects used to describe the candidates ($M = 8.0$ & $M = 7.6$, respectively).

On the other hand, for H2, the use of newspapers and television together led to less knowledge than when newspapers alone were used: The number of candidate's first and last names correctly reported was 6.6 for those using newspapers alone and 4.4 for those using television and newspapers [$T(80) = 2.49$, $p < .008$]. The number of correct facts known about the primary candidates was 15.8 for those using newspapers alone while for those using television and newspapers it was 13.0, [$T(80) = 1.54$, $p < .064$]. There were, however, no significant differences for those who used newspapers alone versus both television and newspapers for the number of issues subjects believed candidates would focus on ($M= 5.3$ & $M = 4.1$, respectively, [$T(80) =$

1.08, $\underline{p} < .142$]; for the number of physical attributes subjects used to describe the candidates ($\underline{M} = 8.0$ & $\underline{M} = 8.3$, respectively); or for the mean number of issues learned during the one-week period of the experiment by those using newspapers ($\underline{M} = 1.6$) versus those using television and newspapers ($\underline{M} = 1.3$), [$\underline{T}(76.0) = 1.97$, n.s.].

### Newspaper dependency is associated with knowledge

The next set of hypotheses are for the association of newspaper dependency with knowledge.

H3: Those who are newspaper dependent only or,
H4: both newspaper and television dependent
will have more knowledge about political candidates than
will those who are television dependent only.

The statistical test used here is the test for the significance of the correlation coefficients. The support for these hypotheses is weak at best: Although the correlations between newspaper dependency and the knowledge items as well as the overall knowledge index are significant, they are small--ranging from .15 to .21 and averaging .18. The relationship of television dependency to knowledge is even less systematic with correlations ranging from .07 to .21 and averaging .16.[18]

## Television Effects

### Television use leads to subjective, negative and visual characterizations

The hypotheses following stem from the research suggesting that television use leads to subjective characterization, visual attributes, and negative characterizations.

H5: Those using television alone or,
H6: both newspapers and television
will make less objective attributions than will those using
newspapers alone.

There is no support for the first hypothesis--there is no difference for the use of newspapers ($\underline{M} = 53.9$) versus television ($\underline{M} = 55.8$) on the objectivity of the attributions made about the candidates

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[18] *Also, as the correlation coefficients themselves suggest, there is no significant difference between those who are newspaper dependent ($\underline{M} = 30.0$) and those who are television dependent only ($\underline{M} = 31.9$) on the amount*

[T(77) = .68, n.s.]. The second hypothesis is supported--the objectivity of those using newspapers alone (M = 53.9) is significantly higher than of those using both television and newspapers (M = 47.8), [T(62.4) = 1.91, $p < .03$].

H7: Those using television alone or,
H8: both television and newspapers
will make more visual attributions about political candidates than will those using newspapers.

Neither of these hypotheses are supported: There is no significant difference for the number of visual attributions between those using television alone (M = 64.8) versus newspapers alone (M = 67.0) [T(77) = 1.30, $p < .099$]; nor for those using television and newspapers (M = 66.5) versus newspapers alone (67.0), [T(76) = .26, n.s.].

H9: Those using television alone or,
H10: both televisions and newspapers
will make attributions that are less positive about political candidates than will those using newspapers alone.

There is no significant difference between those using newspapers alone (M = 21.9) and those using television alone (M = 23.8) on the positivity of the attributions [T(60.6) = .66, n.s.]. Most stunning, the attributions of those who used both television and newspapers (M = 30.1) were significantly more positive than those who used newspapers alone (M = 21.9), [T(57.2) = 2.71], exactly opposite from the hypothesized direction.

Television dependency leads to subjective, negative and visual characterizations

The next hypotheses refer to the relationship between TV dependency and attributions made about candidates.

H11: Those who are television dependent only, or
H12: television and newspaper dependent:
will make attributions about political candidates that are

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(footnote continued)

*of knowledge overall about candidates for the presidential primary [T(112) = .49, n.s.], nor on any of the other knowledge items.*

less objective than will those who are newspaper dependent only.

H13: Those who are television dependent only, or
H14: television and newspaper dependent:
will make attributions about political candidates that are more visual than will those who are newspaper dependent.

H15: Those who are television dependent only, or
H16: television and newspaper dependent:
will make attributions about political candidates that are more negative than will those who are newspaper dependent only.

These hypotheses are tested with a test of the significance of the correlation coefficients. There are no significant correlations for television dependency with objectivity of characterization, or use of visual attributes or negative attributes.[19]

### Interaction of Newspaper and Television Use, and Newspaper and Television Dependency

The ANOVA test for the interaction of the media use condition with newspaper and television dependency revealed a three-way interaction [$\underline{F}(4,187) = 2.36$, $\underline{p} < .056$, Figure 1].

H17: Higher levels of knowledge will occur for those who are newspaper dependent and are unrestrained, or who used newspapers alone, or both television and newspapers, when compared to those who used television alone.

The three t-tests for differences of means indicate no significant differences: Those who were newspaper dependent and who used television alone ($\underline{M} = 35.1$) did not exhibit overall lower levels of knowledge compared to those unrestrained ($\underline{M} = 36.4$, [$\underline{T}(24) =.12$, n.s.]), those using newspapers alone (M = 30.7, [T(20) = .51, n.s.]) and those using both newspapers and television (M = 34.8, [T(16) = .04, n.s.]).

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[19] *Consistent with the correlational evidence the objectivity score for attributions about the candidates for those who are newspaper dependent (*$\underline{M} = 51.7$*) is not statistically different from those who are television dependent only (*$\underline{M} = 53.6$*), [*$\underline{T}(102) = .62$*, n.s.]; the visualness score for attributions about the candidates for those who are television dependent only (*$\underline{M} = 66.5$*) is not statistically significantly different from those who are newspaper dependent (*$\underline{M} = 64.3$*), [*$\underline{T}(130) = 1.26$*,* $\underline{p} < .11$*]; and the positivity score for attributions about the primary candidates for those who are newspaper dependent (*$\underline{M} = 24.0$*) is not significantly greater than for those who are television dependent only (*$\underline{M} = 21.8$*), [*$\underline{T}(98.3) = 1.12$*,* $\underline{p} < .14$*].*

H18: Higher levels of knowledge will occur for those who are newspaper and television dependent and are unrestrained, or who used newspapers alone, or both television and newspapers, when compared to those who used television alone.

The three tests for differences of means for this hypothesis were all significant: those who are newspaper and television dependent and who were unrestrained had higher knowledge scores (M = 61.7, [T(15) = 2.83, p < .007], as did those who used newspapers alone (M = 54.5, [T(18) = 2.41, p < .014]), or who used both newspapers and television (M = 49., [T(15) = 1.73, p < .053] than did those using television alone (M = .31).

H19: Attributions about political candidates will be less objective for those who are television dependent only and who used television alone or used both television and newspapers than for those using newspapers alone.

The ANOVA test for the three-way interaction of media use condition, newspaper dependency, and television dependency approached significance ([F(4,200) = 1.85, p < .122] and support for the hypothesis is mixed. Figure 2 graphically presents these findings. For subjects who are television dependent only and who used newspapers, objectivity was only near significantly greater (M = 62.7) than for those using TV (M = 47.4, [T(9) = 1.45, p < .092]). The differences were significantly greater [T(15) = 2.15, p < .025) when compared to those using both television and newspapers (M = 48).

H20: Attributions about political candidates will be less objective for those who are television and newspaper dependent and used television alone or used both television and newspapers than for those using newspaper only.

There is no support for this hypothesis. In fact, the evidence indicates the opposite is more likely to be true. Those who are television and newspaper dependent and who used newspapers had a lower objectivity score ($M = 48.7$) than did those using television alone ($M = 55.9$), [$T(18) = 1.36$, $p < .097$. The mean difference for those who used both television and newspapers ($M = 42.3$) is not significant [$F(15) = 1.00$, n.s.].

Also, as Figure 2 indicates, those using newspapers alone and who were TV dependent made the most "objective" attributions to describe the candidates, while those using both newspapers and television and who were dependent upon both TV and newspapers for political information made the most subjective attributions to describe political candidates.

H21: Attributions about political candidates will be more visual in nature for those who are television dependent only and used television alone or used both television and newspapers than for those using newspapers alone.

The ANOVA test for the three-way interaction of media use with media dependency and the visualness of the characterizations is not significant [$F(4,187) = 1.14$, n.s.]. Those who are television dependent only and who used television alone, have the same mean "visual" score for the candidate characterization ($M = 66.4$) as those using newspapers alone ($M = 67.4$), [$T(9) = .24$, n.s.], and as do those using television and newspapers both ($M = 70.5$), [$T(15) = 1.08$, n.s., Figure 3].

H22: Attributions about political candidates will be more visual in nature for those who are television and newspaper dependent and used television alone or used both television and newspapers than for those using newspapers alone.

There is no significant difference in the "visualness" of the candidate characterizations for those who are television and newspaper dependent and who used television alone ($M = 65.3$) versus those using newspapers alone [$T(18) = .46$, n.s.]. For those using television and newspapers, the mean was 60.5 [$T(15) = 1.38$, $p < .095$], with the direction of the differences indicating that those using newspapers had higher visual scores than those who use both media.

H23: Attributions about political candidates will be less positive for those who are television dependent only and use television alone or used both television and newspapers than for those using newspapers alone.

These is no three-way interaction of media use with media dependency for the positivity of the characterizations made about the candidates. Those who are television dependent, and who used television alone have essentially the same positivity of characterization ($M$ = 21.2) as do those who used newspapers alone ($M$ = 18.5), [$T$(9) = .49, n.s.]. For those using television and newspapers ($M$ = 24.3), the mean is only slightly higher than for those using newspapers alone ($M$ = 18.5), [$T$(15) = 128, $p$ < .109, Figure 4].

H24: Attributions about political candidates will be less positive for those who are television and newspaper dependent and used television alone or used both television and newspapers than for those using newspapers alone.

This hypothesis also received little support. The mean positivity for those who are newspaper and television dependent and who used TV alone is 22.5 compared with 24.2 for those using newspapers alone, while for those using both newspapers and TV it is 32.4, [with a $T$(15) = 1.27, $p$ < .113].

## CONCLUSIONS

As with all experimental research, there are questions about the extent to which the results would hold for more general situations. Obviously all experiments are "artificial" by their very nature; the major asset for this one is the use of adult subjects in a field setting. But are these school system employees like other citizens? Probably not. They were screened to be sure they had access to both a daily newspaper and cable (or satellite) television. They agreed to participate in a fairly extensive survey about politics and they agreed to constrain their media habits for one week. If anything, they have more access to newspapers and television and are probably more concerned about politics than the average citizen. In this light, the results of this study, particularly with regard to the characterizations of political candidates, deserve more scrutiny

## Media Dependency--Political Knowledge and Characterizations

This research found only weak relationships between media dependency, political knowledge and negative or subjective characterizations of the candidates. A reasonable explanation for failing to observe this often reported relationship is the early stage of the campaign itself, i.e., one full year before the election. In fact, on the average, those in the control group could offer only one or two names of potential candidates and very few appearance characterizations for the candidates whose names they knew. And (if one conceptualizes negativity of candidate characterizations as cynicism), the control group exhibited very low levels of cynicism (Figure 4). Generally, it was only as a result of asking the subjects to learn about the candidates from either television or newspapers that learning occurred and negative, subjective or visual characterizations of the candidates resulted.

## Media Use--Political Knowledge and Characterization

As so much of communication research suggests, people learned best from newspapers; those using newspapers during the one week of the experiment had a 140 percent increase in their knowledge of the names of likely candidates, and over a 60 percent increase in the number of correct facts they were able to provide about the potential candidates.

And, contrary to earlier correlational findings, use of television did not increase negativity. It was only when those who had been newspaper dependent used TV alone, or those who had been TV dependent used newspapers alone, that negative characterizations such as dishonest, unorthodox looking, monotone voice, bags under eyes, unfit, unpresidential, etc. developed. And, unexpectedly, it was observed that those who used both television and newspapers were the most likely to label the candidates as personable, clean cut, energetic, pleasant, pleasant voice, good sense of humor and competent. Schema theory may help explain some of these findings. When a person who habitually uses one medium for political information, seeks information from another medium, this may have the effect of making that individual more of an "expert." If we assume that media reports of candidates tend to focus more on the negative aspects of the candidates, then these individuals who have suddenly become "media experts" may find that the negative attributes stand out more for them when they are using a new medium rather than one they normally use. On the other hand, the use of both television and newspapers may provide a "balance" to the attributions resulting in relatively positive characterizations.

Contrary to findings in some of the earlier research, objectivity did not decrease with use of television alone, but with the use of both television and newspapers regardless of the media subjects normally use, but most noticeably for those who are dependent upon both newspaper and television. It appears that those who usually gather their information about political candidates from both newspapers and television and continue that behavior are most likely to make attributions about candidates that include such comments as: sleazy, wimpy, idiot, wild looking, dishonest, etc. It seems that it is the "media junkie" who comes away from the experience with not only the most positive attributions about political candidates, but the least "objective" view of political candidates.

### Media Use and Media Habits--Political Knowledge and Characterizations

Surprisingly, those high in both newspaper and television news dependency, not those who are newspaper dependent solely, were those for whom the most knowledge gain occurred. One explanation may be the methods used in earlier research that has suggested strong effects for newspaper dependency. Generally these are correlational studies where researchers forced respondents to choose among media rather than allowing for both high television and newspaper dependency. The study reported here, on the other hand, allowed subjects to self-describe media exposure and reliance and classified subjects based upon overall responses. Another explanation for the differences found in this study may be due to changes in the media themselves. The number of networks, channels and all-news programming networks has snowballed in the past decade. CNN has, for example, become the news media of choice, for many "news junkies."

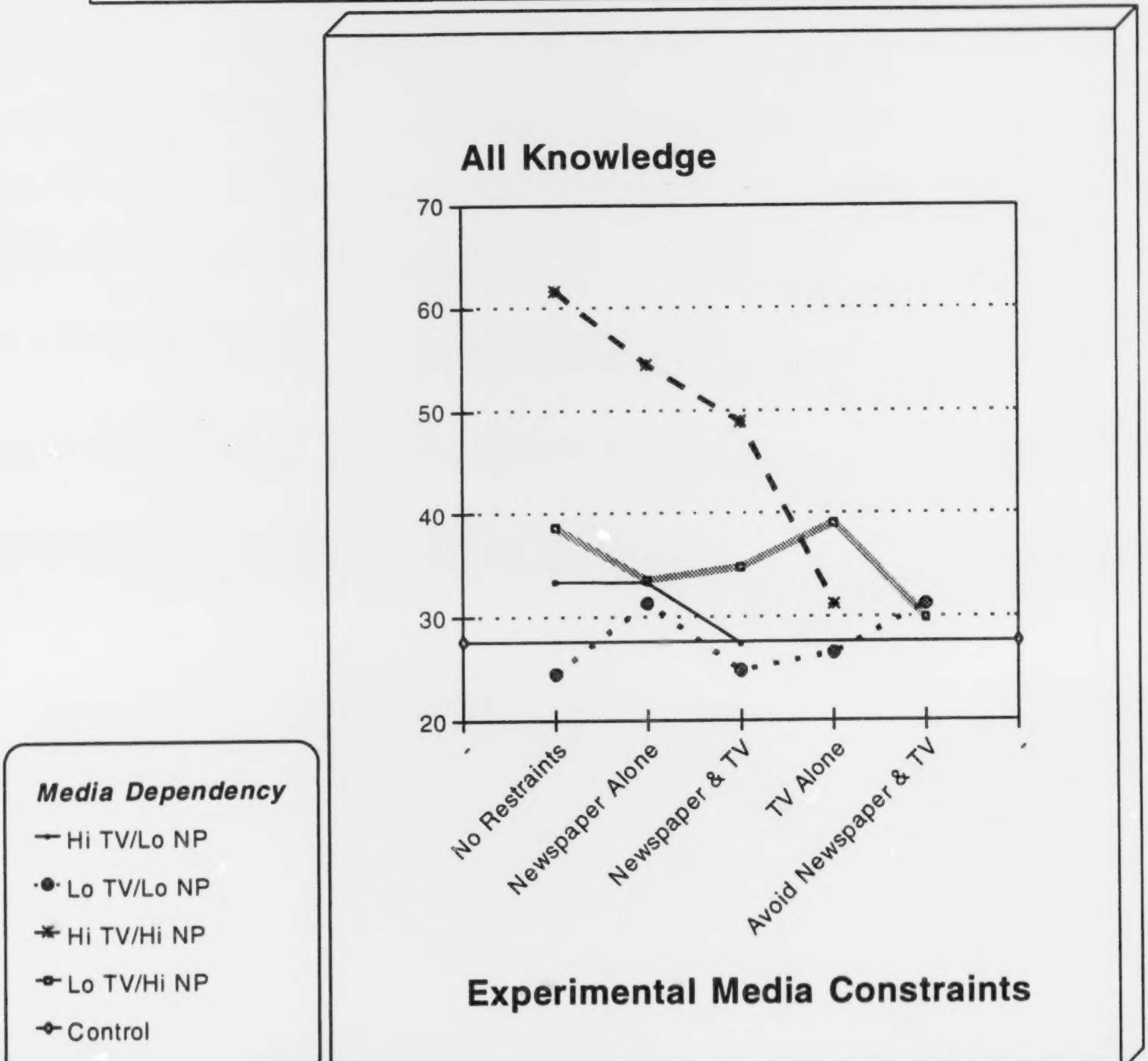
## Revisiting The Television-News-Causes-Subjectivity,-Negativity-and-a-Visual-Orientation Myth

These findings make for a strong indictment of television news as a purveyor of knowledge: in spite of being motivated, "knowledge" came only to those who used the newspaper and who were expert users of media for news information (those who habitually were both TV and newspaper dependent). Those who used television gained very little knowledge about the candidates in spite of their high level of motivation. Not only is TV news difficult for those without background knowledge or skills (Gunter, 1987), it also is difficult for others: "Thus the type of learning which TV news facilitates may be most effective when it is supplemented by information from other news sources. Learning from TV will be enhanced if viewers use newspaper accounts and conversations with others to cue their recall and activate schemas" (Robinson & Davis, 1989, p. 23).

On the other hand, general assertions that television news leads to subjectivity, negativity, and a "visual" orientation need to be revisited. The evidence presented here contradicts that generalization: 1) Those who normally have little exposure to political information in the media make very "objective" evaluations of political candidates when they choose to use television as a source of information, 2) Those who use both television and newspapers, regardless of prior media dependency, make very "positive" attributions toward candidates, and 3) "Non-visual" characterizations result for those who are television and newspaper dependent and who choose to use both television and newspapers for political information.

Thus, while we may continue to accuse television political coverage of failing to provide citizens with much knowledge about political candidates, at least in the early primary stage, we cannot continue to blithely impute TV as the perpetrator of a subjective, negative, and visually oriented citizenry.

# Index of All Knowledge Items of Nine Presidential Candidates by Prior Media Dependency

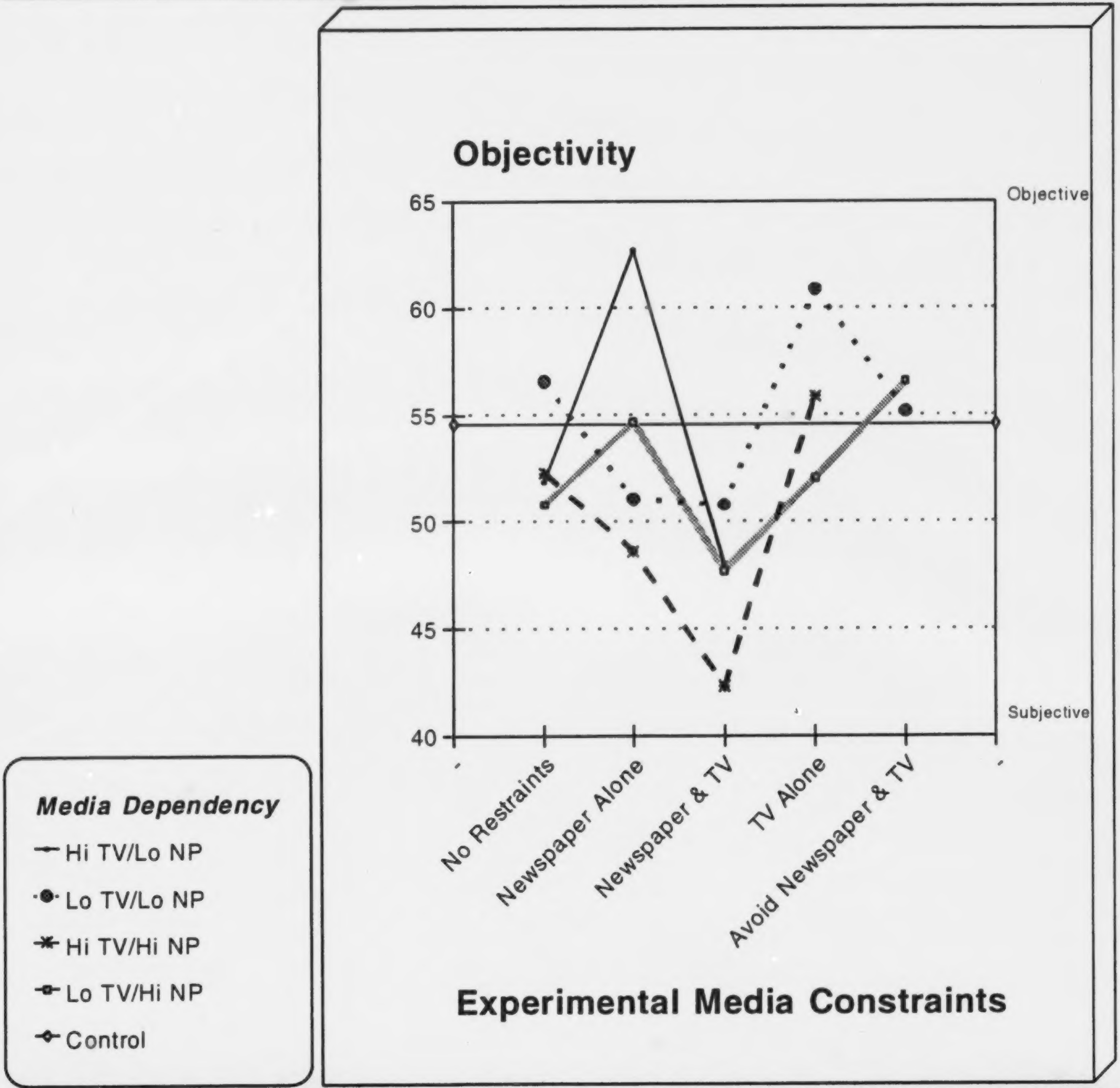


*Cells with N<5 are not reported in this figure*

***Three-way Interaction:* $F(4,187)=2.36$, $p<.056$**

*Figure No. 1*

# "Objectivity" of Attributes Used to Describe Nine Presidential Candidates by Prior Media Dependency

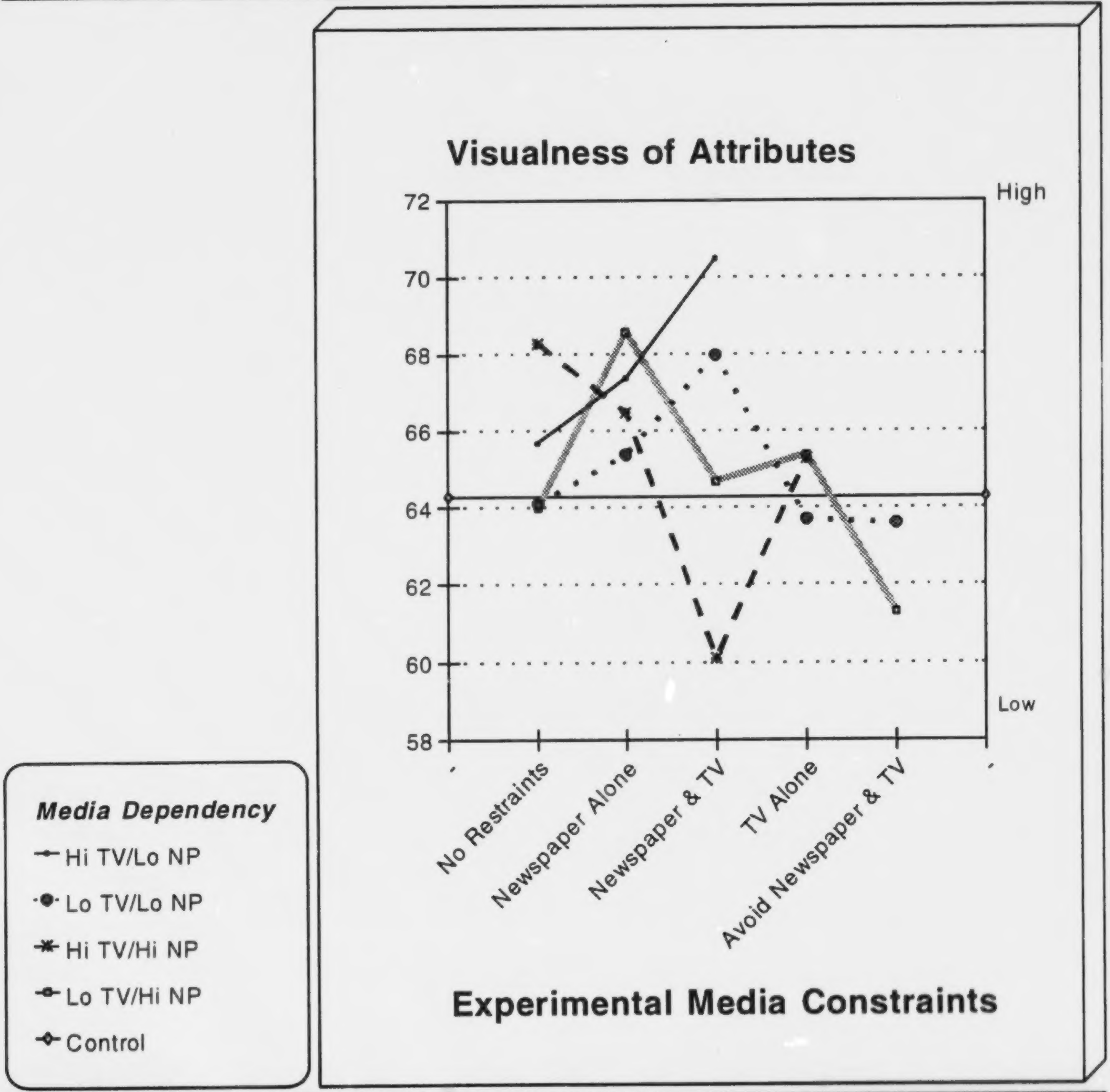


*Cells with N<5 are not reported in this figure*

***Three-way Interaction:* F(4,200)=1.85, p<.122**

*Figure No. 2*

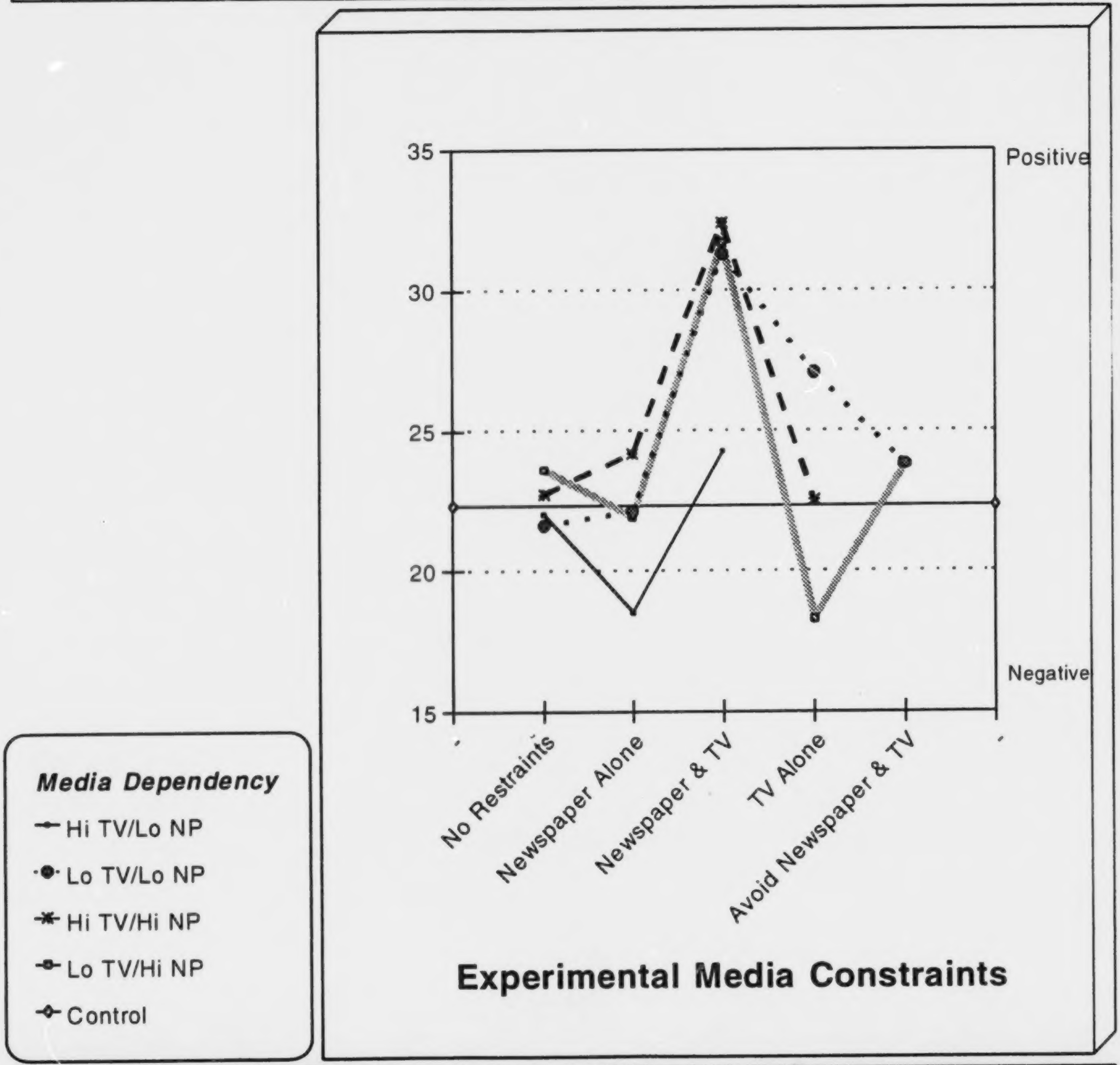
# Visualness of Attributes Used to Describe Nine Presidential Candidates by Prior Media Dependency



*Cells with N<5 are not reported in this figure*

*Figure No. 3*

# Positivity of Attributes Used to Describe Nine Presidential Candidates by Prior Media Dependency



*Cells with N<5 are not reported in this figure*

*Figure No. 4*

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Appendix A:
Table No. 1: Positivity of Attributes About Political Candidates, ranked from High to Low. (Percent indicates proportion of judges saying it is a positive attribute.)

| Percent | Statement | Code |
|---|---|---|
| 100 | personable | 142 |
| 95.2 | clean cut | 153 |
| 95.2 | energetic | 126 |
| 95.2 | pleasant | 189 |
| 95.2 | pleasant voice | 243 |
| 95.2 | good sense of humor | 512 |
| 95.2 | competent | 163 |
| 95.2 | intelligent | 172 |
| 90.5 | good eye contact | 006 |
| 90.5 | dresses appropriately | 106 |
| 90.5 | carries self well | 137 |
| 90.5 | classic | 080 |
| 90.5 | healthy/fit | 128 |
| 90.5 | impressive | 517 |
| 90.5 | mature | 176 |
| 90.5 | honest | 131 |
| 85.7 | neatly dressed | 104 |
| 85.7 | good physical shape | 135 |
| 85.7 | attractive | 165 |
| 85.7 | neat | 158 |
| 85.7 | gentlemanly | 533 |
| 85.7 | friendly | 166 |
| 85.7 | charismatic | 505 |
| 85.7 | speaks with authority | 242 |
| 85.7 | down-to-earth | 130 |
| 85.7 | good person | 125 |
| 85.7 | loves his wife/other assn. with wife | 511 |
| 85.7 | articulate | 238 |
| 81 | looks good/good looking | 121 |
| 81 | nice suits/clothes/well dressed | 107 |
| 81 | distinguished looking | 143 |
| 81 | pleasant/approachable | 537 |
| 81 | projects strong sense | 177 |
| 81 | professional looking | 144 |
| 81 | sensitivity | 123 |
| 81 | sincere | 179 |
| 81 | important | 244 |
| 81 | well-spoken | 239 |
| 81 | wise/intelligent | 175 |
| 81 | distinctive | 550 |
| 76.2 | handsome | 127 |
| 76.2 | looks nice/nice looking | 145 |
| 76.2 | looks good on TV | 547 |
| 71.4 | all-American look | 129 |
| 71.4 | expressive eyes | 012 |
| 71.4 | good smile | 133 |
| 71.4 | statesman-like/dignified | 152 |
| 71.4 | aggressive | 156 |
| 71.4 | fatherly = 190 | 532 |
| 66.7 | smiles a lot | 124 |
| 66.7 | conservative dress | 101 |
| 66.7 | athletic/rugged | 138 |
| 66.7 | debonair | 546 |
| 66.7 | fatherly/uncle-like | 190 |
| 66.7 | reveals emotions | 552 |
| 66.7 | serious | 542 |
| 66.7 | amusing | 187 |
| 61.9 | well groomed | 134 |
| 61.9 | concerned re: appearance | 509 |
| 61.9 | mannerisms | 507 |
| 61.9 | business man | 148 |
| 61.9 | sophisticated | 170 |
| 61.9 | decent | 157 |
| 57.1 | straight-forward look | 159 |
| 57.1 | immaculate | 122 |
| 57.1 | gestures a lot | 251 |
| 52.4 | relaxed look | 183 |
| 52.4 | recognizable/could pick out in photo | 531 |
| 52.4 | trim | 048 |
| 52.4 | striking | 515 |
| 52.4 | Christian | 213 |
| 47.6 | strong face | 076 |
| 47.6 | solid/robust | 519 |
| 47.6 | youthful | 140 |
| 47.6 | phenotype Caucasian | 516 |
| 47.6 | sturdy/well built | 057 |
| 47.6 | female gender | 212 |
| 42.9 | Kennedy look | 504 |
| 42.9 | stylish | 196 |
| 42.9 | familiar looking | 136 |
| 42.9 | suave | 500 |
| 42.9 | happy-go-lucky/jovial | 168 |
| 42.9 | real man | 548 |
| 38.1 | cute | 180 |
| 38.1 | movie-TV star look-alike | 523 |
| 38.1 | three-piece suit | 103 |
| 38.1 | short hair | 022 |
| 38.1 | rugged | 502 |
| 38.1 | grandfather-like | 151 |
| 38.1 | early 40s | 225 |
| 38.1 | old South | 185 |
| 38.1 | Democrat | 541 |
| 38.1 | Republican | 510 |
| 38.1 | Vietnam vet | 233 |
| 38.1 | male gender | 211 |
| 38.1 | liberal | 554 |
| 38.1 | rugged | 560 |
| 33.7 | sharp features/angular/drawn | 079 |
| 33.3 | medium build/average | 040 |
| 33.3 | dark hair | 024 |
| 33.3 | no facial hair | 060 |
| 33.3 | not bald/has hair | 021 |
| 33.3 | looks conservative | 150 |
| 28.6 | heavy/strong features | 083 |
| 28.6 | casual dress/LA look | 109 |
| 28.6 | rolled up sleeves | 108 |
| 28.6 | dark/tanned | 201 |
| 28.6 | young/younger | 228 |
| 28.6 | Preppie-look | 535 |
| 28.6 | combative | 562 |
| 28.6 | stern | 543 |
| 28.6 | medal winner/lost leg | 234 |
| 23.8 | nice chin | 068 |
| 23.8 | slender | 042 |

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

|  |  |  |
|---|---|---|
| 23.8 | rosy cheeks | 070 |
| 23.8 | sandy hair | 016 |
| 23.8 | dark eyes | 005 |
| 23.8 | tall/taller | 051 |
| 23.8 | dimple in chin | 085 |
| 23.8 | black hair | 026 |
| 23.8 | flamboyant | 549 |
| 23.8 | laid back | 167 |
| 23.8 | white race | 037 |
| 23.8 | mid-50s/50s | 221 |
| 23.8 | middle-aged | 226 |
| 23.8 | outspoken/loud/talks a lot | 246 |
| 23.8 | rich | 536 |
| 23.8 | not conservative | 553 |
| 19 | smirky grin | 067 |
| 19 | rectangular face | 088 |
| 19 | western look | 501 |
| 19 | average hair | 020 |
| 19 | Mediterranean look | 097 |
| 19 | sharp/flashy dresser | 105 |
| 19 | dark eyebrows | 084 |
| 19 | medium complexion | 205 |
| 19 | a Ken doll | 527 |
| 19 | combed/part | 018 |
| 19 | raw boned | 556 |
| 19 | burly/staunch/robust | 181 |
| 19 | fair skinned | 204 |
| 19 | boyish | 174 |
| 19 | glasses | 002 |
| 19 | white bread | 557 |
| 19 | average/medium | 058 |
| 19 | soft spoken | 245 |
| 19 | playboy/ladies man | 198 |
| 19 | Texan | 099 |
| 19 | liberal looking | 160 |
| 14.3 | politician look | 155 |
| 14.3 | Zen look | 192 |
| 14.3 | big eyes | 011 |
| 14.3 | lots of/longish hair | 017 |
| 14.3 | straight hair | 035 |
| 14.3 | heavy/heavy set | 043 |
| 14.3 | wavy hair/curly | 027 |
| 14.3 | Irish looking | 098 |
| 14.3 | salt-and-pepper hair | 034 |
| 14.3 | no glasses | 009 |
| 14.3 | left-handed | 250 |
| 14.3 | African American | 093 |
| 14.3 | average looking/ordinary/normal/okay | 147 |
| 14.3 | yuppie | 146 |
| 14.3 | goofy | 169 |
| 14.3 | minority | 038 |
| 14.3 | common | 154 |
| 14.3 | flaky | 194 |
| 14.3 | single = 518 | 529 |
| 14.3 | Southern talk | 237 |
| 9.5 | chip monkey face-flat/funny face | 069 |
| 9.5 | round face | 078 |
| 9.5 | olive | 202 |
| 9.5 | top wide/bottom narrow | 082 |
| 9.5 | Pillsbury doughboy | 551 |
| 9.5 | Mafia-/mobster-look | 508 |
| 9.5 | light-colored eyes | 010 |
| 9.5 | small/little | 052 |
| 9.5 | slim/lean/slight | 046 |
| 9.5 | light | 203 |
| 9.5 | unshaven/mustache | 075 |
| 9.5 | weathered | 561 |
| 9.5 | brown hair | 029 |
| 9.5 | light hair | 032 |
| 9.5 | gray hair/graying/silver | 023 |
| 9.5 | bow-ties | 110 |
| 9.5 | old/elderly/older | 227 |
| 9.5 | like LBJ | 528 |
| 9.5 | late 50s | 224 |
| 9.5 | forehead | 072 |
| 9.5 | rigid | 539 |
| 9.5 | late 40s/40s | 223 |
| 9.5 | cocky/wise guy | 188 |
| 9.5 | Italian | 091 |
| 9.5 | ethnic accent | 247 |
| 9.5 | wild looking | 162 |
| 9.5 | Jewish | 100 |
| 9.5 | association with Linda Ronstadt | 514 |
| 9.5 | New Yorker | 090 |
| 9.5 | comparison with another candidate | 522 |
| 4.8 | too media looking | 184 |
| 4.8 | Bush-like look | 178 |
| 4.8 | thin lips | 061 |
| 4.8 | pale | 206 |
| 4.8 | droopy eyes/not set in | 007 |
| 4.8 | fat | 044 |
| 4.8 | lanky | 045 |
| 4.8 | thin face | 087 |
| 4.8 | large/big lips/big mouth | 071 |
| 4.8 | thin/thinner | 041 |
| 4.8 | cadaverous | 545 |
| 4.8 | square head/jaw-large head | 066 |
| 4.8 | Latin look | 096 |
| 4.8 | ruddy | 208 |
| 4.8 | stout | 056 |
| 4.8 | frumpy/unkempt | 503 |
| 4.8 | triple chins | 089 |
| 4.8 | sits a lot | 558 |
| 4.8 | chunky/plump/stocky/pudgy/chubby | 049 |
| 4.8 | like Anthony Perkins | 513 |
| 4.8 | sweaters | 102 |
| 4.8 | wrinkles/lines | 063 |
| 4.8 | short/shorter | 053 |
| 4.8 | artificial limb | 231 |
| 4.8 | red-neck | 193 |
| 4.8 | sideburns | 015 |
| 4.8 | dyes hair | 019 |
| 4.8 | sleazy | 520 |
| 4.8 | old/aged/aging | 139 |
| 4.8 | like Dukakis | 559 |
| 4.8 | Sixties | 222 |
| 4.8 | old drunk | 538 |
| 4.8 | Greek | 094 |
| 4.8 | illness | 530 |
| 4.8 | black race | 036 |
| 4.8 | worried | 544 |
| 4.8 | looks corny/rural/dorky | 141 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4.8 | Spanish/Hispanic | 092 |
| 4.8 | difficult | 534 |
| 4.8 | wimpy/mousy | 200 |
| 4.8 | idiot/stupid | 182 |
| 4.8 | two-faced | 526 |
| 4.8 | crook | 521 |
| 4.8 | bachelor/unmarried | 518 |
| 4.8 | dishonest | 197 |
| 4.8 | other religious categorization | 214 |
| 0 | beady eyes | 003 |
| 0 | ugly | 164 |
| 0 | unattractive | 173 |
| 0 | not good looking | 149 |
| 0 | stocky | 054 |
| 0 | small mouth | 074 |
| 0 | poor posture | 261 |
| 0 | meaty face/fat/rugged | 081 |
| 0 | little eyes | 004 |
| 0 | not round face | 077 |
| 0 | teeth need work | 248 |
| 0 | jutting chin | 086 |
| 0 | baggy eyes | 008 |
| 0 | greasy hair | 031 |
| 0 | overweight | 050 |
| 0 | pointy/thin nose | 065 |
| 0 | skinny/gaunt | 047 |
| 0 | swarthy | 207 |
| 0 | bushy eyebrows | 064 |
| 0 | not tall | 055 |
| 0 | big nose/prominent/long | 062 |
| 0 | frowns a lot | 191 |
| 0 | non-descriptive/non-distinguishable | 132 |
| 0 | not small | 059 |
| 0 | white hair | 033 |
| 0 | not much hair | 025 |
| 0 | mole on face | 073 |
| 0 | receding hair/balding/thinning | 030 |
| 0 | bald | 028 |
| 0 | disabled | 232 |
| 0 | bland/plain | 171 |
| 0 | unpleasant/funny/odd voice | 249 |
| 0 | tired | 186 |
| 0 | looks ethnic | 095 |
| 0 | weasely | 199 |
| 0 | unfit | 524 |
| 0 | portrays underworld | 195 |
| 0 | unpresidential | 540 |
| 0 | whiny voice | 241 |
| 0 | K sue married son | 555 |
| 0 | monotone voice | 236 |
| 0 | squeaky voice | 240 |
| 0 | unorthodox looking | 161 |
| 0 | dishonest | 506 |
| 0 | never seen | 001 |
| 0 | bags under eyes/dark circles | 113 |
| 0 | tired = 186 | 525 |

Appendix A:

Table No. 2: Objectivity of Attributes About Political Candidates, ranked from High to Low. (Percent indicates proportion of judges saying it is an objective attribute.)

| Percent | Statement | Code |
|---|---|---|
| 100 | no glasses | 009 |
| 100 | Vietnam vet | 233 |
| 100 | bachelor/unmarried | 518 |
| 94.7 | dark eyes | 005 |
| 94.7 | three-piece suit | 103 |
| 94.7 | female gender | 212 |
| 94.7 | artificial limb | 231 |
| 94.4 | sideburns | 015 |
| 94.4 | no facial hair | 060 |
| 94.4 | bow-ties | 110 |
| 94.4 | medal winner/lost leg | 234 |
| 94.4 | illness | 530 |
| 89.5 | glasses | 002 |
| 89.5 | baggy eyes | 008 |
| 89.5 | dark hair | 024 |
| 89.5 | black hair | 026 |
| 89.5 | fair skinned | 204 |
| 89.5 | male gender | 211 |
| 89.5 | left-handed | 250 |
| 88.9 | dimple in chin | 085 |
| 88.9 | Spanish/Hispanic | 092 |
| 88.9 | Democrat | 541 |
| 84.2 | bald | 028 |
| 84.2 | brown hair | 029 |
| 84.2 | black race | 036 |
| 84.2 | African American | 093 |
| 84.2 | rolled up sleeves | 108 |
| 83.3 | white race | 037 |
| 83.3 | Texan | 099 |
| 83.3 | Jewish | 100 |
| 83.3 | association with Linda Ronstadt | 514 |
| 78.9 | light hair | 032 |
| 78.9 | white hair | 033 |
| 78.9 | straight hair | 035 |
| 78.9 | mole on face | 073 |
| 78.9 | sweaters | 102 |
| 78.9 | disabled | 232 |
| 77.8 | gray hair/graying/silver | 023 |
| 77.8 | minority | 038 |
| 77.8 | dark eyebrows | 084 |
| 77.8 | triple chins | 089 |
| 77.8 | Republican | 510 |
| 77.8 | K sue married son | 555 |
| 73.7 | not bald/has hair | 021 |
| 73.7 | salt-and-pepper hair | 034 |
| 73.7 | Italian | 091 |
| 73.7 | Greek | 094 |
| 73.7 | early 40s | 225 |
| 72.2 | combed/part | 018 |
| 72.2 | dyes hair | 019 |
| 72.2 | receding hair/balding/thinning | 030 |
| 72.2 | forehead | 072 |
| 72.2 | unshaven/mustache | 075 |

|  |  |  |
|---|---|---|
| 72.2 | recognizable/could pick out in photo | 531 |
| 72.2 | rigid | 539 |
| 68.4 | late 50s | 224 |
| 66.7 | sandy hair | 016 |
| 66.7 | wavy hair/curly | 027 |
| 66.7 | wrinkles/lines | 063 |
| 66.7 | New Yorker | 090 |
| 66.7 | ethnic accent | 247 |
| 63.2 | bushy eyebrows | 064 |
| 63.2 | olive | 202 |
| 63.2 | mid-50s/50s | 221 |
| 61.1 | light-colored eyes | 010 |
| 61.1 | late 40s/40s | 223 |
| 61.1 | gestures a lot | 251 |
| 61.1 | phenotype Caucasian | 516 |
| 57.9 | short hair | 022 |
| 57.9 | not much hair | 025 |
| 57.9 | greasy hair | 031 |
| 57.9 | looks ethnic | 095 |
| 57.9 | business man | 148 |
| 57.9 | Sixties | 222 |
| 55.6 | not round face | 077 |
| 55.6 | sharp features/angular/drawn | 079 |
| 55.6 | healthy/fit | 128 |
| 55.6 | sits a lot | 558 |
| 52.6 | short/shorter | 053 |
| 52.6 | light | 203 |
| 52.6 | Christian | 213 |
| 52.6 | middle-aged | 226 |
| 52.6 | Southern talk | 237 |
| 50 | lots of/longish hair | 017 |
| 50 | rectangular face | 088 |
| 50 | teeth need work | 248 |
| 50 | rich | 536 |
| 50 | white bread | 557 |
| 47.7 | tall/taller | 051 |
| 47.4 | good eye contact | 006 |
| 47.4 | not tall | 055 |
| 47.4 | stout | 056 |
| 47.4 | big nose/prominent/long | 062 |
| 47.4 | pointy/thin nose | 065 |
| 47.4 | rosy cheeks | 070 |
| 47.4 | good physical shape | 135 |
| 47.4 | frowns a lot | 191 |
| 44.4 | round face | 078 |
| 44.4 | top wide/bottom narrow | 082 |
| 44.4 | jutting chin | 086 |
| 44.4 | thin face | 087 |
| 44.4 | Latin look | 096 |
| 44.4 | conservative dress | 101 |
| 44.4 | casual dress/LA look | 109 |
| 44.4 | old/elderly/older | 227 |
| 42.1 | little eyes | 004 |
| 42.1 | droopy eyes/not set in | 007 |
| 42.1 | overweight | 050 |
| 42.1 | small/little | 052 |
| 42.1 | stocky | 054 |
| 42.1 | smiles a lot | 124 |
| 42.1 | old/aged/aging | 139 |
| 42.1 | dark/tanned | 201 |
| 42.1 | monotone voice | 236 |

|  |  |  |
|---|---|---|
| 38.9 | big eyes | 011 |
| 38.9 | not small | 059 |
| 38.9 | large/big lips/big mouth | 071 |
| 38.9 | heavy/strong features | 083 |
| 38.9 | Irish looking | 098 |
| 38.9 | pale | 206 |
| 38.9 | ruddy | 208 |
| 38.9 | young/younger | 228 |
| 38.9 | mannerisms | 507 |
| 38.9 | raw boned | 556 |
| 36.8 | thin/thinner | 041 |
| 36.8 | fat | 044 |
| 36.8 | lanky | 045 |
| 36.8 | trim | 048 |
| 36.8 | chunky/plump/stocky/pudgy/chubby | 049 |
| 36.8 | thin lips | 061 |
| 36.8 | small mouth | 074 |
| 36.8 | athletic/rugged | 138 |
| 36.8 | articulate | 238 |
| 33.3 | heavy/heavy set | 043 |
| 33.3 | speaks with authority | 242 |
| 33.3 | pleasant voice | 243 |
| 33.3 | soft spoken | 245 |
| 33.3 | good sense of humor | 512 |
| 33.3 | pleasant/approachable | 537 |
| 33.3 | cadaverous | 545 |
| 33.3 | not conservative | 553 |
| 31.6 | slender | 042 |
| 31.6 | slim/lean/slight | 046 |
| 31.6 | square head/jaw-large head | 066 |
| 31.6 | well groomed | 134 |
| 31.6 | youthful | 140 |
| 31.6 | looks conservative | 150 |
| 31.6 | burly/staunch/robust | 181 |
| 31.6 | squeaky voice | 240 |
| 31.6 | poor posture | 261 |
| 31.6 | rugged | 502 |
| 27.8 | expressive eyes | 012 |
| 27.8 | average hair | 020 |
| 27.8 | meaty face/fat/rugged | 081 |
| 27.8 | medium complexion | 205 |
| 27.8 | concerned re: appearance | 509 |
| 27.8 | loves his wife/other assn. with wife | 511 |
| 27.8 | solid/robust | 519 |
| 27.8 | comparison with another candidate | 522 |
| 27.8 | stern | 543 |
| 27.8 | weathered | 561 |
| 26.3 | beady eyes | 003 |
| 26.3 | skinny/gaunt | 047 |
| 26.3 | sturdy/well built | 057 |
| 26.3 | average/medium | 058 |
| 26.3 | strong face | 076 |
| 26.3 | dresses appropriately | 106 |
| 26.3 | down-to-earth | 130 |
| 26.3 | good smile | 133 |
| 26.3 | clean cut | 153 |
| 26.3 | friendly | 166 |
| 26.3 | mature | 176 |
| 26.3 | tired | 186 |
| 26.3 | well-spoken | 239 |
| 26.3 | western look | 501 |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 26.3 | dishonest | 506 |
| 22.2 | medium build/average | 040 |
| 22.2 | classic | 080 |
| 22.2 | Mediterranean look | 097 |
| 22.2 | average looking/ordinary/normal/okay | 147 |
| 22.2 | outspoken/loud/talks a lot | 246 |
| 22.2 | like Anthony Perkins | 513 |
| 22.2 | crook | 521 |
| 22.2 | movie-TV star look-alike | 523 |
| 22.2 | a Ken doll | 527 |
| 22.2 | like LBJ | 528 |
| 22.2 | gentlemanly | 533 |
| 22.2 | Preppie-look | 535 |
| 22.2 | old drunk | 538 |
| 22.2 | worried | 544 |
| 22.2 | debonair | 546 |
| 22.2 | Pillsbury doughboy | 551 |
| 22.2 | reveals emotions | 552 |
| 22.2 | like Dukakis | 559 |
| 22.2 | combative | 562 |
| 21.1 | neatly dressed | 104 |
| 21.1 | sharp/flashy dresser | 105 |
| 21.1 | nice suits/clothes/well dressed | 107 |
| 21.1 | immaculate | 122 |
| 21.1 | handsome | 127 |
| 21.1 | honest | 131 |
| 21.1 | carries self well | 137 |
| 21.1 | distinguished looking | 143 |
| 21.1 | grandfather-like | 151 |
| 21.1 | neat | 158 |
| 21.1 | straight-forward look | 159 |
| 21.1 | competent | 163 |
| 21.1 | projects strong sense | 177 |
| 21.1 | Bush-like look | 178 |
| 21.1 | cute | 180 |
| 21.1 | pleasant | 189 |
| 21.1 | flaky | 194 |
| 21.1 | portrays underworld | 195 |
| 21.1 | whiny voice | 241 |
| 21.1 | frumpy/unkempt | 503 |
| 21.1 | Kennedy look | 504 |
| 16.7 | serious | 542 |
| 15.8 | smirky grin | 067 |
| 15.8 | nice chin | 068 |
| 15.8 | chip monkey face-flat/funny face | 069 |
| 15.8 | sensitivity | 123 |
| 15.8 | energetic | 126 |
| 15.8 | personable | 142 |
| 15.8 | professional looking | 144 |
| 15.8 | yuppie | 146 |
| 15.8 | stateman-like/dignified | 152 |
| 15.8 | aggressive | 156 |
| 15.8 | ugly | 164 |
| 15.8 | laid back | 167 |
| 15.8 | sophisticated | 170 |
| 15.8 | intelligent | 172 |
| 15.8 | unattractive | 173 |
| 15.8 | boyish | 174 |
| 15.8 | old South | 185 |
| 15.8 | amusing | 187 |
| 15.8 | fatherly/uncle-like | 190 |
| 15.8 | red-neck | 193 |
| 15.8 | stylish | 196 |
| 15.8 | playboy/ladies man | 198 |
| 15.8 | charismatic | 505 |
| 11.1 | liberal looking | 160 |
| 11.1 | wise/intelligent | 175 |
| 11.1 | swarthy | 207 |
| 11.1 | important | 244 |
| 11.1 | unpleasant/funny/odd voice | 249 |
| 11.1 | suave | 500 |
| 11.1 | Mafia-/mobster-look | 508 |
| 11.1 | striking | 515 |
| 11.1 | difficult | 534 |
| 11.1 | real man | 548 |
| 10.5 | looks good/good looking | 121 |
| 10.5 | good person | 125 |
| 10.5 | all-American look | 129 |
| 10.5 | looks corny/rural/dorky | 141 |
| 10.5 | looks nice/nice looking | 145 |
| 10.5 | not good looking | 149 |
| 10.5 | common | 154 |
| 10.5 | politician look | 155 |
| 10.5 | decent | 157 |
| 10.5 | attractive | 165 |
| 10.5 | happy-go-lucky/jovial | 168 |
| 10.5 | goofy | 169 |
| 10.5 | sincere | 179 |
| 10.5 | relaxed look | 183 |
| 10.5 | Zen look | 192 |
| 5.6 | unorthodox looking | 161 |
| 5.6 | cocky/wise guy | 188 |
| 5.6 | impressive | 517 |
| 5.6 | unfit | 524 |
| 5.6 | two-faced | 526 |
| 5.6 | unpresidential | 540 |
| 5.6 | flamboyant | 549 |
| 5.3 | non-descriptive/non-distinguishable | 132 |
| 5.3 | familiar looking | 136 |
| 5.3 | wild looking | 162 |
| 5.3 | too media looking | 184 |
| 5.3 | wimpy/mousy | 200 |
| 0 | bland/plain | 171 |
| 0 | idiot/stupid | 182 |
| 0 | weasely | 199 |
| 0 | sleazy | 520 |
| | never seen | 001 |
| | bags under eyes/dark circles | 113 |
| | dishonest | 197 |
| | other religious categorization | 214 |
| | tired = 186 | 525 |
| | single = 518 | 529 |
| | fatherly = 190 | 532 |
| | looks good on TV | 547 |
| | distinctive | 550 |
| | liberal | 554 |
| | rugged | 560 |

Appendix A:
Table No. 3: Visualness of Attributes About Political Candidates, ranked from High to Low. (Percent indicates proportion of judges saying they would have to see the candidate to make the judgment.)

| Percent | Statement | Code |
|---|---|---|
| 100 | chip monkey face-flat/funny face | 069 |
| 100 | all-American look | 129 |
| 100 | too media looking | 184 |
| 94.7 | beady eyes | 003 |
| 94.7 | smirky grin | 067 |
| 94.7 | nice chin | 068 |
| 94.7 | not good looking | 149 |
| 94.7 | politician look | 155 |
| 94.7 | straight-forward look | 159 |
| 94.7 | ugly | 164 |
| 94.7 | unattractive | 173 |
| 94.7 | Bush-like look | 178 |
| 94.7 | relaxed look | 183 |
| 94.4 | medium build/average | 040 |
| 94.4 | heavy/strong features | 083 |
| 94.4 | rectangular face | 088 |
| 94.4 | looks good/good looking | 121 |
| 94.4 | recognizable/could pick out in photo | 531 |
| 89.5 | good eye contact | 006 |
| 89.5 | slender | 042 |
| 89.5 | stocky | 054 |
| 89.5 | thin lips | 061 |
| 89.5 | small mouth | 074 |
| 89.5 | strong face | 076 |
| 89.5 | dresses appropriately | 106 |
| 89.5 | handsome | 127 |
| 89.5 | clean cut | 153 |
| 89.5 | cute | 180 |
| 89.5 | Zen look | 192 |
| 89.5 | poor posture | 261 |
| 89.5 | western look | 501 |
| 89.5 | Kennedy look | 504 |
| 88.9 | expressive eyes | 012 |
| 88.9 | average hair | 020 |
| 88.9 | round face | 078 |
| 88.9 | sharp features/angular/drawn | 079 |
| 88.9 | meaty face/fat/rugged | 081 |
| 88.9 | Mediterranean look | 097 |
| 88.9 | looks nice/nice looking | 145 |
| 88.9 | pale | 206 |
| 88.9 | movie-TV star look-alike | 523 |
| 84.2 | little eyes | 004 |
| 84.2 | droopy eyes/not set in | 007 |
| 84.2 | fat | 044 |
| 84.2 | lanky | 045 |
| 84.2 | trim | 048 |
| 84.2 | neatly dressed | 104 |
| 84.2 | sharp/flashy dresser | 105 |
| 84.2 | immaculate | 122 |
| 84.2 | good smile | 133 |
| 84.2 | well groomed | 134 |
| 84.2 | olive | 202 |
| 83.3 | big eyes | 011 |
| 83.3 | thin/thinner | 041 |
| 83.3 | square head/jaw-large head | 066 |
| 83.3 | large/big lips/big mouth | 071 |
| 83.3 | not round face | 077 |
| 83.3 | top wide/bottom narrow | 082 |
| 83.3 | dark eyebrows | 084 |
| 83.3 | jutting chin | 086 |
| 83.3 | thin face | 087 |
| 83.3 | stylish | 196 |
| 83.3 | medium complexion | 205 |
| 83.3 | teeth need work | 248 |
| 83.3 | Mafia-/mobster-look | 508 |
| 83.3 | striking | 515 |
| 83.3 | a Ken doll | 527 |
| 83.3 | cadaverous | 545 |
| 83.3 | Pillsbury doughboy | 551 |
| 78.9 | baggy eyes | 008 |
| 78.9 | short hair | 022 |
| 78.9 | greasy hair | 031 |
| 78.9 | overweight | 050 |
| 78.9 | rosy cheeks | 070 |
| 78.9 | three-piece suit | 103 |
| 78.9 | good physical shape | 135 |
| 77.8 | light-colored eyes | 010 |
| 77.8 | sandy hair | 016 |
| 77.8 | lots of/longish hair | 017 |
| 77.8 | combed/part | 018 |
| 77.8 | slim/lean/slight | 046 |
| 77.8 | skinny/gaunt | 047 |
| 77.8 | small/little | 052 |
| 77.8 | pointy/thin nose | 065 |
| 77.8 | Latin look | 096 |
| 77.8 | nice suits/clothes/well dressed | 107 |
| 77.8 | casual dress/LA look | 109 |
| 77.8 | attractive | 165 |
| 77.8 | burly/staunch/robust | 181 |
| 77.8 | swarthy | 207 |
| 77.8 | ruddy | 208 |
| 77.8 | gestures a lot | 251 |
| 77.8 | concerned re: appearance | 509 |
| 77.8 | raw boned | 556 |
| 73.7 | dark eyes | 005 |
| 73.7 | straight hair | 035 |
| 73.7 | heavy/heavy set | 043 |
| 73.7 | tall/taller | 051 |
| 73.7 | not tall | 055 |
| 73.7 | stout | 056 |
| 73.7 | big nose/prominent/long | 062 |
| 73.7 | bushy eyebrows | 064 |
| 73.7 | rolled up sleeves | 108 |
| 73.7 | smiles a lot | 124 |
| 73.7 | non-descriptive/non-distinguishable | 132 |
| 73.7 | carries self well | 137 |
| 73.7 | neat | 158 |
| 73.7 | boyish | 174 |
| 73.7 | frowns a lot | 191 |
| 73.7 | dark/tanned | 201 |
| 73.7 | light | 203 |
| 73.7 | fair skinned | 204 |
| 73.7 | rugged | 502 |
| 73.7 | frumpy/unkempt | 503 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 72.2 | wavy hair/curly | 027 |
| 72.2 | chunky/plump/stocky/pudgy/chubby | 049 |
| 72.2 | not small | 059 |
| 72.2 | unshaven/mustache | 075 |
| 72.2 | dimple in chin | 085 |
| 72.2 | triple chins | 089 |
| 72.2 | Irish looking | 098 |
| 72.2 | conservative dress | 101 |
| 72.2 | young/younger | 228 |
| 72.2 | like Anthony Perkins | 513 |
| 72.2 | sits a lot | 558 |
| 72.2 | weathered | 561 |
| 68.4 | dark hair | 024 |
| 68.4 | not much hair | 025 |
| 68.4 | brown hair | 029 |
| 68.4 | white hair | 033 |
| 68.4 | salt-and-pepper hair | 034 |
| 68.4 | short/shorter | 053 |
| 68.4 | wrinkles/lines | 063 |
| 68.4 | sweaters | 102 |
| 68.4 | familiar looking | 136 |
| 68.4 | athletic/rugged | 138 |
| 66.7 | receding hair/balding/thinning | 030 |
| 66.7 | no facial hair | 060 |
| 66.7 | mole on face | 073 |
| 66.7 | classic | 080 |
| 66.7 | solid/robust | 519 |
| 66.7 | Preppie-look | 535 |
| 66.7 | debonair | 546 |
| 63.2 | glasses | 002 |
| 63.2 | gray hair/graying/silver | 023 |
| 63.2 | black hair | 026 |
| 63.2 | bald | 028 |
| 63.2 | light hair | 032 |
| 63.2 | youthful | 140 |
| 63.2 | red-neck | 193 |
| 63.2 | artificial limb | 231 |
| 61.1 | no glasses | 009 |
| 61.1 | sideburns | 015 |
| 61.1 | dyes hair | 019 |
| 61.1 | not bald/has hair | 021 |
| 61.1 | bow-ties | 110 |
| 61.1 | old/elderly/older | 227 |
| 61.1 | mannerisms | 507 |
| 61.1 | phenotype Caucasian | 516 |
| 61.1 | sleazy | 520 |
| 61.1 | white bread | 557 |
| 57.9 | old/aged/aging | 139 |
| 57.9 | bland/plain | 171 |
| 57.9 | disabled | 232 |
| 57.9 | left-handed | 250 |
| 57.9 | suave | 500 |
| 55.6 | like LBJ | 528 |
| 55.6 | like Dukakis | 559 |
| 52.6 | sturdy/well built | 057 |
| 52.6 | average/medium | 058 |
| 52.6 | African American | 093 |
| 52.6 | healthy/fit | 128 |
| 52.6 | yuppie | 146 |
| 52.6 | average looking/ordinary/normal/okay | 147 |
| 52.6 | grandfather-like | 151 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 50 | unpleasant/funny/odd voice | 249 |
| 50 | flamboyant | 549 |
| 47.4 | energetic | 126 |
| 47.4 | distinguished looking | 143 |
| 47.4 | goofy | 169 |
| 47.4 | tired | 186 |
| 47.4 | fatherly/uncle-like | 190 |
| 47.4 | Sixties | 222 |
| 47.4 | late 50s | 224 |
| 44.4 | minority | 038 |
| 44.4 | forehead | 072 |
| 44.4 | looks ethnic | 095 |
| 44.4 | old drunk | 538 |
| 44.4 | rigid | 539 |
| 44.4 | combative | 562 |
| 42.1 | Greek | 094 |
| 42.1 | common | 154 |
| 42.1 | laid back | 167 |
| 42.1 | weasely | 199 |
| 42.1 | early 40s | 225 |
| 38.9 | black race | 036 |
| 38.9 | white race | 037 |
| 38.9 | cocky/wise guy | 188 |
| 38.9 | mid-50s/50s | 221 |
| 38.9 | late 40s/40s | 223 |
| 38.9 | unfit | 524 |
| 38.9 | illness | 530 |
| 38.9 | gentlemanly | 533 |
| 38.9 | pleasant/approachable | 537 |
| 38.9 | stern | 543 |
| 36.8 | Italian | 091 |
| 36.8 | business man | 148 |
| 36.8 | happy-go-lucky/jovial | 168 |
| 36.8 | sophisticated | 170 |
| 36.8 | projects strong sense | 177 |
| 36.8 | portrays underworld | 195 |
| 36.8 | middle-aged | 226 |
| 33.3 | soft spoken | 245 |
| 33.3 | outspoken/loud/talks a lot | 246 |
| 33.3 | ethnic accent | 247 |
| 33.3 | unpresidential | 540 |
| 33.3 | serious | 542 |
| 33.3 | worried | 544 |
| 33.3 | real man | 548 |
| 33.3 | reveals emotions | 552 |
| 31.6 | looks corny/rural/dorky | 141 |
| 31.6 | statesman-like/dignified | 152 |
| 31.6 | wild looking | 162 |
| 31.6 | friendly | 166 |
| 31.6 | pleasant | 189 |
| 31.6 | flaky | 194 |
| 31.6 | charismatic | 505 |
| 27.8 | Spanish/Hispanic | 092 |
| 27.8 | playboy/ladies man | 198 |
| 27.8 | speaks with/authority | 242 |
| 27.8 | pleasant voice | 243 |
| 27.8 | impressive | 517 |
| 27.8 | difficult | 534 |
| 26.3 | personable | 142 |
| 26.3 | professional looking | 144 |
| 26.3 | decent | 157 |

|  |  |  |
|---|---|---|
| 26.3 | idiot/stupid | 182 |
| 26.3 | old South | 185 |
| 26.3 | wimpy/mousy | 200 |
| 26.3 | whiny voice | 241 |
| 22.2 | Texan | 099 |
| 22.2 | Jewish | 100 |
| 22.2 | medal winner/lost leg | 234 |
| 22.2 | good sense of humor | 512 |
| 22.2 | association with Linda Ronstadt | 514 |
| 22.2 | two-faced | 526 |
| 21.1 | sensitivity | 123 |
| 21.1 | down-to-earth | 130 |
| 21.1 | sincere | 179 |
| 16.7 | New Yorker | 090 |
| 16.7 | female gender | 212 |
| 16.7 | important | 244 |
| 16.7 | crook | 521 |
| 16.7 | comparison with another candidate | 522 |
| 16.7 | rich | 536 |
| 16.7 | not conservative | 553 |
| 16.7 | K sue married son | 555 |
| 15.8 | good person | 125 |
| 15.8 | unorthodox looking | 161 |
| 15.8 | mature | 176 |
| 15.8 | monotone voice | 236 |
| 15.8 | well-spoken | 239 |
| 15.8 | squeaky voice | 240 |
| 11.1 | Republican | 510 |
| 11.1 | loves his wife/other assn. with wife | 511 |
| 11.1 | single = 518 | 529 |
| 11.1 | Democrat | 541 |
| 10.5 | honest | 131 |
| 10.5 | aggressive | 156 |
| 10.5 | competent | 163 |
| 10.5 | wise/intelligent | 175 |
| 10.5 | Southern talk | 237 |
| 5.6 | Vietnam vet | 233 |
| 5.6 | bachelor/unmarried | 518 |
| 5.3 | looks conservative | 150 |
| 5.3 | liberal looking | 160 |
| 5.3 | intelligent | 172 |
| 5.3 | amusing | 187 |
| 5.3 | male gender | 211 |
| 5.3 | Christian | 213 |
| 5.3 | articulate | 238 |
| 5.3 | dishonest | 506 |
|  | never seen | 001 |
|  | bags under eyes/dark circles | 113 |
|  | dishonest | 197 |
|  | other religious categorization | 214 |
|  | tired = 186 | 525 |
|  | fatherly = 190 | 532 |
|  | looks good on TV | 547 |
|  | distinctive | 550 |
|  | liberal | 554 |
|  | rugged | 560 |

Mass Communication and Society

# Election-year Usefulness of Newspapers and Other Information Sources for Alabama Legislators

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# Election-year Usefulness of Newspapers and Other Information Sources for Alabama Legislators

This election-year study compares information sources that Alabama legislators use for two broad classes of job-related information: legislative or *office-execution* information (e.g., for background on bills or for actual roll-call decision making); and *office-maintenance* information, including constituency-monitoring (e.g., constituent concerns and public opinion) and reelection information (e.g., for assessing one's opponent and one's public image).

The study seeks to replicate and extend earlier findings. It retests a single study's finding that "personal insiders" (e.g., family, friends) may wield more influence as sources of some kinds of legislative information than do the "statehouse insiders" (lobbyists, colleagues, committee leaders) that have typically dominated in most previous studies. But it also asks new questions about the influence of these personal insiders during an election year, and about the possible role--as a "looking glass" during the campaign--of newspapers.

## Background and Research Hypotheses

Measuring an elected official's use of information sources can be tricky. Few will acknowledge being influenced by adversaries such as the news media (Abrams and Hawkins 1984; Cohen 1963), or will find it politically correct, particularly during an election year, to acknowledge using any sources in lieu of direct contact with the people being represented. One must, however, question the reliability of claims that constituent input is gained on every issue or decision.

Most studies of legislators' sources of information are thus limited primarily to the array available at the statehouse or capital (Bradley 1980; Sabatier and Whiteman 1985; Wissel, O'Connor and King 1976). Within that framework, data show that, for specialized decision making information, lawmakers report use of purposive insider statehouse sources who can provide technical information on demand--

lobbyists (Jewell 1982; Zeigler 1968; Milbrath 1963), expert colleagues (Zwier 1979; Porter 1974), or committee members (Fenno 1973; Zwier 1979). Mooney (1991, 446) argues that the dominance of these insider sources, particularly for legislative vote decision information, is in part a function of similarity; relied-upon sources "speak the same language" as a legislator, and understand his/her "motives, rhythms, and job requirements."

Professional insiders also may prevail at the statehouse level (Riffe 1988) for tracking "which way the wind is blowing" (e.g., how colleagues may vote), even though Washington, D.C., lawmakers reportedly use the news media to keep up with high visibility colleagues in "the sprawling federal establishment" (Key 1961, 405; Matthews 1974; Dunn 1969a and 1974).

Generally speaking, findings consistently suggest that the legislative process is an "insider's game." Yet most studies are concerned primarily with roll-call vote decision making, and most focus only on differences among statehouse insider sources. Of course, some lawmakers rely less on information per se than on cues from other colleagues in deciding how to vote (Matthews and Stimson 1975).

But legislators attend to information sources outside the statehouse, and they need information for more than roll-call voting. In fact, when one study broadened the array of sources to include personal insiders--family, friends and non-professional contacts--it found that this coterie wielded a surprising degree of influence in Alabama legislators' professional matters. Most important, personal insiders were rated significantly more useful than all other sources--including even fellow lawmakers and paid statehouse lobbyists--as sources of job decision information (Riffe 1988).

The study concluded that Alabama legislators' decisions are "influenced by inside sources--trusted personal contacts, as well as colleagues and special interest groups--whose impartiality, from the public's point of view, is by definition suspect" (Riffe 1988, 53-54). For this study, we seek to replicate those findings:

H1: For legislative job decision information, personal insiders will be rated more useful than other sources.

On the other hand, for constituency-monitoring, the news media, especially newspapers, might in theory be important sources, for several reasons. First, there is the assumed electorate-electee linkage. Dunn (1969b) called the press an "instant poll" (832) performing "a substantial linkage function" (838). Zukin (1981, 359) calls news media "opinion-to-policy linkage mechanisms." For others, media tie electorate to elected (Strouse 1975) and reveal "the systematic agenda of community concerns" (Cobb and Elder 1981, 392; Dunn 1974). Yet non-election-year research has shown that some Alabama lawmakers rate personal and professional insiders more useful than other sources, including Dunn's "instant poll," even to tap grassroots thinking (Riffe 1988). Therefore:

H2: For constituency-monitoring information, personal insider sources will be rated more useful than other sources.

How do sources compare for the special election-year information needs a legislator faces (e.g., assessing one's reelection chances or the opponent's strengths)? Presumably, campaigning legislators' greater attention to the campaign might yield information use patterns different from non-election years. (The direct contact lawmakers have with constituents, in election and non-election years, is assumed here. Our focus is on legislators' use of information sources that complement or augment direct contact.)

Should we anticipate a greater election-year role for newspapers? Though their role--for Alabama legislators--as sources of legislative and constituency-monitoring information may be minor, newspapers could arguably have a more important role as sources of information in an election year. For assessing his/her own image or strengths, a campaigning legislator might use the "looking glass" news media. Dunn (1969b, 838) suggested that public officials "at times equate a newspaper's position with public sentiment." And media certainly play a role in shaping the public's image of issues or candidates.

But even this looking glass role may be problematic. Insiders may be perceived as a more useful--flattering?--looking glass than is an adversarial press (Riffe 1990a). And while Alabama legislators could be dependent upon newspapers for learning an opponent's strengths and platform, many trust members of their own camp for assessment of the opposition, if past studies are indicative. Therefore:

H3: For election information, personal insiders will be rated more useful than other sources.

## Method

A mail survey of Alabama legislators was deliberately timed for the spring-summer 1990 reelection season when office-maintenance information needs would be most salient but when, unfortunately, campaigning subjects would be least likely to complete a questionnaire. (All legislative seats were contested, and over 90% of incumbents sought reelection.)

A premailing and two mailings to the 139 legislators (104 representatives, and 35 senators) netted data from only 58 (42%). Statistical tests, however, showed the sample did not significantly underrepresent the legislature on race, gender, political party, or office (senate or house) variables.[1]

Respondents rated each of six sources for each of 10 information types, within three larger categories. First, for legislative or office-execution information lawmakers rated sources for:

-- "what is happening in the capital."
-- "background on issues and proposals facing the legislature."

-- "to help you make decisions in your job."

Second, for office-maintenance constituency-monitoring, sources were rated for:

--"issues on the mind of your constituents."
--"how constituents feel about bills you introduce."
--"issues on the mind of the general public."
--"what's happening 'back home' when you're in the capital."

Finally, for office-maintenance election information, sources were rated for:

--"your own professional strengths and weaknesses."
--"strengths and weaknesses of your opponent at election time."
--"your opponent's platform at election time."

(Sample question wording, "How useful are these sources for information on what issues are on the mind of your constituents?")

The six sources offered were family and friends, staff or advisers, fellow legislators, committee leaders or experts, special interest groups or lobbyists, and newspapers. Rating was via a five-point scale (from "Not at All Useful" to "Very Useful"). A similar instrument had previously been used successfully (Riffe *et al.* 1984; Riffe 1988; Riffe 1990b).

## Findings and Discussion

Most respondents (76%) were Democrat, white (90%) and male (96%), averaging 51 years age, 16 years education, 10 years elective office and 8 years in the legislature. Table 1 provides source means for each information type (higher mean = more useful), ordering of means within information types, and significant (by t-tests) contrasts. Because there were 15 contrasts per information type, the *a priori* alpha was set to a very conservative 0.05/15, or 0.0033 (only *p*-values of 0.0033 or smaller were treated as significant).

The highest mean ratings were for family/friends (8 of 10 ratings above 4 on the scale). That coterie's highest overall ratings were for linkage to events back home during sessions, and as a looking glass, to tell the lawmaker his/her strengths and weaknesses. All source means were rated above the midpoint (3.0) for all but three types of information: what's happening back home during session, one's own strengths, and one's opponent's strengths. The widest ranges among source mean usefulness ratings were for assessing one's own strengths (2.71 to 4.63), for finding out news of back home (2.84 to 4.65), and for assessing an opponent's strengths (2.94 to 4.36). Newspapers' highest mean ratings were for home news during sessions, and their poorest ratings were as a looking glass.

The first hypothesis, predicting greater personal insider usefulness for job decision information, was supported. Family/friends were rated highest of all sources, and significantly higher than committee leaders. As in a previous study (Riffe 1988), the influence of a family/friends coterie extended to decision making in the lawmaker's professional arena. Newspapers were well outside the inner circle of influence.

When that personal insider category is excluded, the importance of professional insiders--fellow legislators, lobbyists, committee leaders and staff/advisors--shown in previous studies is reaffirmed. There were no significant differences among the four statehouse insiders here. But if personal insiders were most useful for actual job decisions, statehouse insiders' important, perhaps complementary, role in pre-decision fact-gathering was equally important. Note that fellow legislators were the most useful source when the lawmaker wanted to find out what's going on around the capital (how better than directly from the horse's mouth?), while lobbyists were top-rated for issue background.

Family/friends, so important for job decisions, were fairly unimportant for statehouse news or issue background, rating below even newspapers for the latter. Papers fared moderately well--third most useful--for keeping up with news around the state capital. Somewhat surprisingly, staff/advisers were significantly less useful than lobbyists on issue background, and rated lower than fellow legislators and committee leaders. While previous studies (Fenno 1973) have detailed an important role for committee leaders (they tend to be experts, and power and seniority accompany leadership positions), the comparatively low ratings of staff/advisors may indicate lawmakers' views of these as primarily clerical help.

The sample's open acknowledgement of lobbyist influence (rated most useful for background, and a close third for decisions) is intriguing. While many lobbyists are public relations professionals who view their function as informing, others enjoy a popular image as relying less on the persuasive power of information and more on entertainment and fine dining.

The second hypothesis, of personal insider dominance for monitoring constituents, was tested four ways (i.e., with "constituent concerns," "constituent reactions," "general public opinion," and "back home" news during sessions). The hypothesis was supported. For constituent concerns, a two-tiered pattern emerged, with family/friends significantly more useful than all other sources. The skeptical might ask, of course, how well that coterie knows or represents constituents. What of newspapers, Dunn's "instant poll" of the grassroots? Though rated above the scale midpoint, newspapers were rated below all other sources, including the four statehouse insiders.

For constituent reactions to the lawmaker's bills, the pattern was nearly identical. The only change involved an increased usefulness of staff/advisers (staff process the lawmaker's mail and phone calls). For general public opinion, newspapers fared better: third-most useful. But family/friends were again rated highest. Of the four statehouse insiders, colleagues--presumably barometers of their own constituencies (or at least of their own family/friends' views of those constituencies!)--were rated most useful. Finally, for back home news during session, newspapers rose to their highest rating, but family/friends were again significantly more useful than any other sources, though second-rated newspapers were, for once, significantly more useful than the four statehouse insider sources.

H3, predicting personal insider dominance for election information or as a looking glass, was tested three ways: for information on the lawmaker's strengths and weaknesses, the opponent's strengths, and the opponent's platform. The hypothesis was supported in two of the tests. First, family/friends were significantly more useful as sources of one's own strengths than all sources. And newspapers' looking glass role was minimal (these ratings were the medium's lowest overall). Lawmakers rated all four types of statehouse insiders significantly more useful than newspapers. Whether family/friends' assessment of the candidate is candid or serves the public is problematic. Low newspaper ratings may reflect in part legislators' general antipathy toward an adversary press role (Riffe 1990a), or a sense that they are inaccurately represented or unfairly treated by newspapers.

Second, for assessing opponents' strengths, family/friends were significantly more useful than other sources, a surprising finding were it not for the coterie's demonstrated influence in other professional areas. Staff/advisers were rated second and, along with lobbyists, were significantly more useful than colleagues, newspapers and committee leaders. These staffers, discussed earlier as fielding constituents' concerns through mail and phone calls, may also thus be privy to constituent views on the opposition.

Note the within-source shift between usefulness for the lawmaker's and the opponent's strengths. Staff, fellow legislators and committee leaders were more useful for the lawmaker's strengths than they were for the opponent's strengths. But newspapers were slightly more useful for assessing "the other guy" than they were for the candidate's own strengths. The same was true for lobbyists. On the other hand, newspapers were as useful as staff/advisers for assessing the opponent's platform. However, family/friends were again rated most useful, but were not significantly more useful than all other sources; for this test, H3 was not supported.

Table 2 recasts the data in two sets of ranks. Column ranks order sources within each information type, while row ranks (across) indicate the information type which earned each source its highest rating. The importance of family/friends signified by Table 2's column ranks was apparent in Table 1, as was the importance of all four types of statehouse insiders, and the comparative unimportance of newspapers. On the other hand, the second set of rankings (across rows) shows what each source does best. For example, family/friends received their best row ranking for back home news during legislative session, and were also ranked the best source (column) for that information type. Lobbyists earned their highest rankings (row) for issue background, and were also ranked as the best source (column) for that information. And newspapers, the second-most useful source for back home news (column), do nothing better (row).

Of course, several sources' strengths are similar. Fellow legislators, committee leaders and lobbyists, for example, each received their highest rankings (row) for issue background. The fact that they were also the top three sources for that information type may suggest complementary functions or overlap among them. To examine the functional similarity among sources suggested by this pattern, Spearman's rho rank-order correlations--using row ranks showing each source's strengths--were computed between pairs of sources. Table 3 data show the clusters among sources for this sample.

As might have been anticipated, fellow legislators, lobbyists, and committee leaders form a cluster of statehouse or professional insider sources, because of common strengths or specialties; as Mooney (1991) suggested, they "speak the same language" as the legislator. All three are significantly intercorrelated. However, exclusion of staff/advisors from that cluster was unanticipated, although the view, proffered earlier, of staff as primarily clerical may explain why. Like staff/advisors, newspapers' strengths are uncorrelated with those of the statehouse sources. Finally, family/friends' strengths are uncorrelated with newspapers' but significantly negatively correlated with those of statehouse insiders (excluding staff/advisors).

## Conclusions

Among the sources explored in this study, some are rated as performing only one or two of these highly specialized information roles even marginally well. Others perform multiple functions with different degrees of success, and some are similar in their patterns of usefulness. And within the types of sources there is differentiation (e.g., staff/advisors vs. other statehouse insiders).

Those intricacies notwithstanding, the most remarkable finding was the overall dominance of the lawmaker's closest circle (family/friends), in the lawmaker's professional decision making, in monitoring consituents, and in serving as an election-year looking glass. Previous studies limited to statehouse insider sources tended to find dominance of those sources for decision information. Here, personal insiders eclipsed the statehouse insiders. But statehouse insiders did play an important role predicted by the literature, as sources of news around the capital and issue background. Newspapers, viewed as perhaps having special linkage and looking glass roles in this election year, were comparatively useless.

Of course, these findings are limited by the study's focus on the legislature of a single state, by the mail survey response rate, and by reliance only on usefulness ratings for different sources.

Though lawmakers do learn the public pulse from many sources, their closest non-professional contacts emerged as, again, their most useful way of getting a feel for constituent concerns and opinions, and for keeping tabs on what was happening back home. Even fellow legislators were more important sources for constituent concerns than were newspapers. Dunn (1969b, 838) had argued that, "(T)he press performs a substantial linkage function in the political system," by providing news both of public thinking and of government activity for those in government. That role hardly seems substantial for this sample.

It is not, however, the historical role of newspapers to serve legislators as sources of constituent concerns or public opinion, or as a looking glass for assessing their own strengths and weaknesses. Yet a variety of theoretical perspectives argue just such a role for newspapers in the public's learning about others' concerns, about public opinion, and about candidates' positions. Perhaps equally important, the news media are an institution "which claims legitimacy and privilege because it does identify and communicate the problems and concerns of society" (Riffe 1988, 53).

Time constraints and issue complexity lead lawmakers to turn to the willing and available insiders who dominate the statehouse when decision options or issue background need exploring, or when voting alignments are changing. Those sources do provide such specialized information on demand, though their having so much unelected power in the legislature may trouble some. Mooney (1991, 445) wrote that "those who can successfully supply information to decision makers will have their interests better represented in the legislative process than those who cannot."

But do time constraints and issue complexity also justify the influence of those same sources for information on constituents' concerns and thinking? More critical, is there any way to justify the dominance of an unelected coterie of close family/friends across the array of information types, but particularly in terms of constituent thinking? As Riffe (1988, 53) wrote, "It is questionable, if not doubtful, whether those sources' continued status as relied-upon insiders depends to any extent upon how well the public is served by its representatives."

# NOTES

[1] Chi-square analyses compared obtained sample data to known population data (the "true" distribution in the legislature). When sample racial composition (black and white) was compared to legislature racial composition in a 2 X 2 analysis, chi-square was 1.52, with 1 d.f., $p = 0.22$. For party (Democrat, Republican), chi-square = 0.045, with 1 d.f., $p = 0.83$. For gender, chi-square = 0.50, with 1 d.f., $p = 0.48$. For office (senators vs. representatives), chi-square = 0.17, with 1 d.f., $p = 0.68$.

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## TABLE 1

### Mean Usefulness of Sources for Alabama Legislators (N=58) By Information Type

| Information Type: | Around Capital | Issue B'ground | Job Decis. | Constit. Concerns | Constit. Reaction | Public Opinion | "Back Home" | Own Strength | Opponent Strength | Opponent Platform |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source: | | | | | | | | | | |
| a) Family, Friends | 3.17 | 3.31 | 4.23 | 4.27 | 4.19 | 4.15 | 4.65 | 4.63 | 4.36 | 4.10 |
| b) Staff, Advisors | 3.42 | 3.71 | 3.71 | 3.40 | 3.40 | 3.37 | 3.20 | 3.84 | 3.56 | 3.71 |
| c) Fellow Legislators | 4.11 | 4.17 | 3.96 | 3.73 | 3.58 | 3.75 | 2.94 | 3.88 | 3.04 | 3.23 |
| d) Lobbyists | 4.06 | 4.35 | 3.92 | 3.63 | 3.55 | 3.29 | 2.84 | 3.23 | 3.54 | 3.52 |
| e) Committee Leaders | 3.61 | 3.98 | 3.60 | 3.54 | 3.30 | 3.23 | 2.92 | 3.35 | 2.94 | 3.04 |
| f) Newspapers | 3.79 | 3.56 | 3.15 | 3.25 | 3.21 | 3.50 | 3.92 | 2.71 | 2.96 | 3.71 |
| Ordered means: | c | d | a | $\underline{a}$ | $\underline{a}$ | a | $\underline{a}$ | $\underline{a}$ | $\underline{a}$ | a |
| within information | d | c | c | c | c | c | $\underline{f}$ | c | b | b,f |
| type--underscore | f | e | d | d | d | f | b | b | $\underline{d}$ | d |
| denotes signifi- | e | b | b | e | b | b | c | e | c | c |
| cant differences | b | f | e | b | e | d | e | $\underline{d}$ | f | e |
| between all means | a | a | f | f | f | e | d | f | e | |
| above and below | | | | | | | | | | |
| the underscore | | | | | | | | | | |

Additional significant contrasts between non-contiguous pairs of means, except as IMPLIED by underscore:

Around Capital: a,c; a,d; b,c; b,d; c,e; d,e.
Issue Background: a,c; a,d; a,e; b,d; c,f; d,f.
Job Decisions: a,e; a,f; c,f; d,f.
Public Opinion: a,b; a,d; a,e.
Own Strength: b,d; b,f; c,d; c,f; e,f.
Opponent Platform: a,c; a,e.

Note: Five-point scale, where (1) "Not At All Useful" and (5) "Very Useful." Significant mean differences WITHIN information types were determined using pairwise t-tests between source means. Because of multiple--(n[n-1])/2 or 15 comparisons within each information type, the *a priori* significance level was set to [.05]/15 or approximately .0033. Pairwise differences were considered significant only if p <.0033 for the computed t.

TABLE 2

Usefulness Rank of Sources for Alabama Legislators (N=58) By Information Type
[ ] denotes rank across rows

| Information Type:<br>Source: | Around Capital | Issue B'ground | Job Decis. | Constit. Concerns | Constit. Reaction | Public Opinion | "Back Home" | Own Strength | Opponent Strength | Opponent Platform |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family, Friends | 6 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | [10] | [9] | [5] | [4] | [6] | [7] | [1] | [2] | [3] | [8] |
| Staff, Advisors | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2.5 |
| | [6] | [3] | [3] | [7.5] | [7.5] | [9] | [10] | [1] | [5] | [3] |
| Fellow Legislators | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| | [2] | [1] | [3] | [6] | [7] | [5] | [10] | [4] | [9] | [8] |
| Lobbyists | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| | [2] | [1] | [3] | [4] | [5] | [8] | [10] | [9] | [6] | [7] |
| Committee Leaders | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 6 |
| | [2] | [1] | [3] | [4] | [6] | [7] | [10] | [5] | [9] | [8] |
| Newspapers | 3 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 2.5 |
| | [2] | [4] | [8] | [6] | [7] | [5] | [1] | [10] | [9] | [3] |

## TABLE 3

### Correlations (Spearman's *rho*) of Source Usefulness for Ten Information Types

| | Newspapers | Committee Leaders | Lobbyists | Fellow Legislators | Staff, Advisors |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family, Friends | -41 | -56* | -66* | -59* | -12 |
| Staff, Advisors | -44 | 42 | 27 | 46 | -- |
| Fellow Legislators | -07 | 94** | 68* | -- | |
| Lobbyists | 04 | 83** | -- | | |
| Committee Leaders | -05 | -- | | | |
| Newspapers | -- | | | | |

NOTE: Decimals omitted.

*p<.05
**<.005